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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 5 October 1998

Lundi 5 octobre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 5 October 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 5 octobre 1998

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I rise today in support of Agri-Food Week. Agri-Food Week has been celebrated for years as an opportunity to honour the people who work in the agriculture and food industries.

This week I encourage everyone to take a minute to recognize the hard work and dedication of those who ensure that Ontario is the world leader in the agri-food industry. Today's agriculture is not just about the production of food. The industry has been able to thrive and prosper by using innovative technologies and resourceful methods. We now use agricultural products in everyday life, from the food we eat to the cars we drive.

The diversification is not limited to finding new markets for traditional crops. Farmers are continually seeking out new crops. In some cases, farmers have branched out to produce in non-traditional areas such as aquaculture, ginseng and even peanuts. In other instances, farmers are looking to the past to provide a renaissance in the agricultural industry. In my riding of Essex-Kent, products such as sugar beets are coming back. Kent county entrepreneurs were instrumental in the reintroduction of industrial hemp.

Farmers and the entire agri-food sector can be proud of their work to ensure that the province's second-largest industry is well-positioned to continue as a world leader and will continue to provide a stable base for Ontario's economy.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): The Conservative government has thrown the property tax system into complete chaos. Certainly in my own area of town, but in fact not just in the rest of Toronto but throughout the GTA and indeed other parts of the province we are hearing now in municipality after municipality the problems that are caused by the new tax system that Mike Harris has brought about. It's interesting to note that what people thought at first was just a Toronto problem is now being

seen for what it is, which is a province-wide issue and a province-wide problem.

Later today we expect the government to introduce what will be the sixth in a series of bills aimed at fixing another piece of this problem. It won't resolve the whole problem, but at least this one deals with providing an extension to the appeal deadlines for people who feel they should appeal the assessment amounts on their properties.

There is unfortunately, even with this extension, one problem that persists. That is that when it comes to commercial properties, the deadline that is still being given or provided in this new legislation, once the legislation is passed — assuming it is passed in the next couple of days — will only give owners of commercial property less than two weeks to effect their rights and pass on to tenants in the properties, who operate the businesses, the old occupancy tax, which of course this government proudly said it had gotten rid of but forgot to tell people they were actually now asking the owners of the property to pay.

We are going to be calling for an extension of that deadline because we think that's the only way we can be fair to all owners of property, commercial or residential.

LAMBTON ECONOMY

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): I'm very pleased to announce that 150 new jobs will be created in the town of Petrolia in my riding of Lambton. The jobs are a result of a new manufacturing facility being constructed by Waterville TG Inc, a manufacturer of automotive weather sealing systems. The warehouse facility will be located on 27 acres of land in Petrolia's industrial park. The proposed start date is mid-December, with completion expected in June 1999.

I commend the town of Petrolia and the Sarnia-Lambton Economic Development Commission for their efforts. Ontario is gaining strength, creating jobs and attracting investments due to the efforts and partnership of this government. Lambton is a good place to invest and do business, and I look forward to continued growth in the Lambton area for the betterment and prosperity of my constituents. This announcement is not only good news for the town of Petrolia and the Sarnia-Lambton area, but also good news for the province. More importantly, it's good news for people looking for jobs in the Sarnia-Lambton area.

CASINO WINDSOR

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): Approximately two weeks ago, the president and chair of the Ontario Casino Corp announced in Las Vegas that the OCC is actively considering a second major casino for the city of Windsor. I wanted to rise in the House today and say to the minister responsible, the Honourable Chris Hodgson, that we believe he ought to be actively exploring this idea and actively looking at the idea of reinvesting some of the considerable profits that are being taken out of Windsor back into our community to protect Casino Windsor's current competitive advantage.

Members will be aware, as I know the minister is and the Ontario Casino Corp is, that three new casinos will be coming on stream in Detroit sometime within the next two to five years. This represents a major competitive threat. We in Windsor are confident that our highly skilled, highly trained workforce and well-managed casino can continue to be competitive. We do, however, look forward to the Ontario Casino Corp reinvesting some of their profits back into our community and back into our gaming operations to ensure that that casino continues to enjoy the success it has to date.

While looking at a second casino, the government should also be looking at potentially investing in Windsor's expanded convention facilities and its waterfront parks to ensure and enhance our competitive position to make sure that those 5,000 jobs in Windsor remain safe and secure.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I'm sure that all members of the House would agree with the often made statement that farming families are the backbone of Ontario. It's a pleasure to stand here today and recognize their hard work, their essential contribution to our economy and their place within the social fabric that binds our communities.

I had the opportunity as Minister of Economic Development and Trade at one point in this province to work with the agri-food industry and to understand that it contributes \$25 billion a year to the provincial economy and that it's the second-largest employer in the province and continues to create jobs for Ontarians. Our farmers provide an ample supply of safe and reliable food that is enjoyed not only here in Ontario but around the world, so it is important and it is I think a wonderful opportunity for us to celebrate Ontario's agri-industry.

But I would be remiss if I didn't comment on some of the things that I hear from people in rural communities as I travel the province. They have watched this government break its election promises. They have told this government again and again that they don't like the fact that you're closing rural hospitals, that you're closing rural schools, that rural roads need drastic attention and that your announcements about things like rural youth employment strategies are empty when you turn around on

the other hand and close good, steady employment opportunities like Rideau Regional Centre and relocate them into urban centres for political purposes. Farming families are the backbone, but the backbone can be broken. I hope this government will reverse its trend.

FAMILY FUN FAIR

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I'd like to seize this opportunity to inform the House today about the highly successful third annual Family Fun Fair that took place at Centennial Park during the weekend of September 18 to 20. The event was organized and implemented by some 45 members of the Rotary Club of Toronto West, along with dozens of friends and neighbours who came together in the spirit of the Etobicoke community.

Some 20,000 residents, as well as corporate sponsors, participated in the Family Fun Fair and raised nearly \$13,000 towards the purchase of a new CAT scanner for the Etobicoke General Hospital. This event signifies the true spirit of outstanding voluntarism and community support by the residents of Toronto West. This third edition of the Family Fun Fair consisted of entertainment for children, bingo, a beer tent, an art show and various musical entertainment, as well as the sampling of great fresh Ontario produce.

I would like to take this opportunity to salute the volunteer spirit of the steering committee. Their dedication, compassion and community spirit encompasses the Rotary Club's motto: "Service above self."

I would like to also commend Frank Berndt, president; Gaston Bottero; John Cochrane; John Fletcher; Doug Ford Jr; Rob Ford; Albert Kezes; Herb Roerig; and John Sparks for an excellent community fundraising event. On behalf of all citizens of Toronto, thank you.

1340

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr David Caplan (Orillia): Tomorrow we will be commencing second reading debate on the apprenticeship legislation, Bill 55.

Today members of the OFL were here calling for public hearings into this legislation and they are skeptical about their chances because of the Harris government's poor record on listening. Not once has this minister indicated that public hearings would take place — not to business, not to the apprentices and certainly not to this Legislature.

There is a compelling reason why the public needs to have input into Bill 55. Dave Johnson is putting public safety at risk. He is lowering wages and he's putting more barriers in front of our young people.

Let's not forget that many stakeholders have their experience with Bill 31 on their minds. How could any of them forget that the Harris government rammed Bill 31 through this Legislature without any public hearings. I hope this minister will have some real sense and will insist that Bill

55 proceed after second reading to province-wide hearings that might lead to some real and substantive dialogue.

I have other reasons for concern as well. The majority of changes to the apprenticeship system will be made in regulation by either yourself or your cabinet colleagues. You're stripping the minimum educational requirements out of the legislation. You're creating potential health and safety problems related to training standards and supervision. And you say to industry to trust you to develop regulations that will address these concerns. They don't trust you. My colleagues in the Liberal caucus don't trust you and the public of Ontario shouldn't trust you either.

The minister should announce in this House today that not only is he going to hold hearings —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Statements.

NURSING STAFF

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I rise to protest the decision of the Sault area hospitals' management to cut staffing at the Thessalon Hospital to only one nurse per 12-hour shift.

The new hospital facility is being reduced to little more than an emergency stabilization nursing station. In the view of the hospital staff, it will be impossible for staff to carry out even this function if more than one emergency patient presents at the emergency room at one time if there is only one nurse on duty. Indeed the joint health and safety committee of the hospital asserted in 1996 that having only one nurse on duty per shift would be hazardous to both patients and staff. Security for a solitary staff person on duty for 12 hours in an open-door emergency room is in itself problematic.

The people of Thessalon and area don't understand why the Ministry of Health would authorize funds for a new, renovated hospital facility at Algoma Manor if it is not to be staffed adequately.

I'm requesting the Minister of Health to meet with representatives of the senior management of the Sault area hospitals, the local health advisory committee and the residents of Thessalon to clear this up. I'd be happy to help arrange such a meeting. It's important that we have adequate staff. It doesn't make sense to have a newly renovated hospital facility if the money isn't available to ensure that it's properly staffed with at least two nurses on duty per 12-hour shift.

WOODSTOCK WOOD SHOW

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate Joe and Sharon Daniel, the organizers of the Woodstock Wood Show, on a very exciting and successful event. Held this weekend in Oxford county, the 13th annual show drew participants from as far away as England and Australia. This year it was bigger and better than ever, as 15,000 people streamed through the gates at Woodstock Fairgrounds to view more than 400 exhibits.

Joe and Sharon have been involved in the show since it started in 1985 and took over its sole organization in 1987. I'm proud to say that the efforts of this enterprising Ingersoll couple and their family have created the largest show of its kind in North America. From wood carving to equipment displays to educational seminars, this show not only appeals to those involved in the industry but to everyone, from those who enjoy woodworking to other wood hobbies to those of us who simply enjoy viewing the talents of local and international artists.

Not only does the wood show add a unique flavour to the host of events held in Oxford county each year, it also adds to the local economy. This year alone 75 people were hired to help run the three-day event.

It takes more than just organizational talent to put together an event like this. It takes perseverance, patience and a love of community. Joe and Sharon Daniel and their family certainly personify these qualities and all of us in Oxford county are proud of their efforts.

I'd like to add that the planning for the 1999 wood show started in May, and I invite all Ontarians to set aside time on the weekend of October 2 and 3, 1999, to visit this unique event.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm on October 5, 6, 7 and 8, 1998, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I'd say the ayes have it.

Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): Today we are celebrating World Teachers' Day in Ontario. October 5 was designated by UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as a day to acknowledge the valuable contribution —

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Even Snobelen can't keep a straight face at that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order, members for Lake Nipigon and Ottawa West.

Hon David Johnson: I'm very sorry if the opposition parties don't share our concern with regard to World Teachers' Day.

Mr Pouliot: It's you we don't believe.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): How much are you going to be spending this week?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Members for Ottawa West, Sudbury and Lake Nipigon.

Hon David Johnson: This day was designated by UNESCO as a day to acknowledge the valuable contribution that teachers make to our society. Our government is joining jurisdictions around the world in recognizing the commitment, creativity and caring of the teaching profession.

Ontario relies upon its teachers to challenge and encourage our young people so that they can become confident, knowledgeable and productive citizens. We have excellent teachers in Ontario who have provided valued guidance to the students through the years.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock.
Minister of Education.

Hon David Johnson: I suspect we all have vivid memories of the teachers we have encountered and who have provided that valuable guidance to us.

In my case, I can recall many years ago a grade 4 teacher who was very kind to me. I can recall a physical education teacher in high school who replaced my equipment when the equipment went astray. I can recall a French teacher who would never give up on me, even though my French might not have quite come up to par. I can recall mathematics teachers who took a great interest in me and, as a result, when I went to university I focused on mathematics. These are the kind of people who have a great influence on the youth today, in a one-on-one situation with our students, as they did on me.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Oriole, member for Ottawa West, come to order. We're going to get through this statement and I would ask that members of the opposition come to order.

Mr Pouliot: The minister is bankrupt.

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon as well.

Mr Pouliot: He needs the IMF.

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, come to order.

1350

Hon David Johnson: These teachers deserve to be supported by an excellent curriculum and an excellent system. The government has worked to support teachers to recognize their professionalism.

We did establish the Ontario College of Teachers, which is an independent, self-funding and professional body that allows Ontario teachers to govern their own profession with more say in defining and controlling professional conduct and practice.

We've also given teachers the tools they need to boost the achievement of their students. A new province-wide elementary curriculum sets standards across the province, making it clear to teachers, but also to parents and students, what should be taught at each grade level. I'm pleased that teachers were instrumental in developing this new curriculum, that we as a government involved teachers and sought their advice. They were extremely instrumental in developing the new curriculum. Teachers have told us that the curriculum assists them in delivering a consistently high quality of education grade by grade, province-wide.

Teachers also guided the design of the new report card in Ontario. This report card makes it easier for teachers to let parents know how their children are doing in school.

The government has set higher standards for our education system. These standards support teachers and allow them to do what they do best.

This government values the dedication of Ontario's teachers. I'm delighted to have the opportunity to pay tribute to those teachers today. They are key partners in our plan to give all Ontario students a high quality of education that will equip our students for success in the future.

We aren't the only ones who recognize the professionalism of our teachers. Indeed, as one example, it's largely thanks to the teachers that the Durham Board of Education won the 1996 Carl Bertelsmann Foundation prize for excellence, ahead of all the other jurisdictions in the world.

On this day of world recognition for teachers, we in Ontario can take great pride in the fact that our teachers are among the very best in the world.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Today is World Teachers' Day, and it is a time to celebrate the work and the commitment of 50 million teachers across the world. We can best begin by celebrating the work of Ontario's teachers, and I would like to do so in a way which is based on reality, as opposed to what we have just heard the Minister of Education offer as his way of celebrating.

I want to start by celebrating the efforts of our kindergarten teachers. I want to celebrate the efforts of those teachers who are facing the challenges of educating and nurturing anywhere from 25 to 28 three- and four-year-olds in their classrooms, often in combined junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten grades and, most often, in the Mike Harris kindergarten classrooms of Ontario, with no teaching assistants whatsoever. I want to celebrate the commitment of that teacher I spoke to in my riding on Saturday who has 28 three- and four-year-olds in her class and who did her best to deal with a little child who had an accident in class. But how do you deal with that when you've got 27 other three- and four-year-olds in your class that day?

I want to celebrate the commitment of the elementary teachers who do have that brand-new curriculum in science and in social studies to teach this year, a curriculum that was virtually dropped on their desks in late spring, a curriculum which they are going to have to teach with the

added challenge of having no in-service training at all, not even the single-day training that was offered for the math and reading curriculum that was dropped on them last summer. They are going to have the even further challenge of teaching that new curriculum without the benefit of having any textbooks to go with the social studies and science curriculum, because the minister was in such a hurry to make his announcement about their new curriculum that he didn't provide enough time for there to be any textbooks written to go with it. I want to celebrate the achievements of elementary school teachers who are still continuing to teach children despite the almost impossible conditions this government has created for them.

I want to celebrate those high school teachers who are responsible for teaching as many as 75 to 100 students in the course of their teaching day with all the demands that kind of workload brings, those high school teachers who are frustrated because their government is telling the public that they can meet the educational needs of those 75 to 100 students in four hours and 10 minutes a day.

I want to celebrate all that is part of a teacher's real working day: the hours of preparation for class, the marking, the providing of extra help, the counselling, the communicating with parents, the working with special-needs children.

I want to celebrate the countless hours of volunteer time that those teachers put into running a full and a rich extracurricular program for their students.

I want to celebrate the achievements of our students and of public education and I want to recognize that the achievements of our students are indeed the achievements of our teachers.

I was pleased that the Minister of Education, I think for the first time in the history of this Legislature, acknowledged the international award that was received by a high school in the Durham board. I wonder why this government isn't prepared to recognize the other achievements of our public education system.

Why don't they recognize the fact that we have the highest secondary school graduation rate in Canada at 88% and how that graduation from high school rate reflects the kind of teaching and support that have been given by countless teachers to those students over their years in elementary and high school?

Why doesn't this government recognize that the top four students in a field of 4,475 who wrote the international senior chemistry exam were from Ontario schools and that in fact 20 of the top 30 of the students writing that chemistry exam were from Ontario schools? Why doesn't the minister talk about this?

Why didn't the government, if it wanted to celebrate teachers and the achievement of teachers and the achievement of students, retract the pamphlet they sent out some time ago that suggested our students were somehow 15 out of 15 in international tests, when the government knew full well that they cut the graph off at 15 so that the Premier could go around saying our students were at the bottom of the pack?

Why have they been so determined to misrepresent the achievements of students and teachers in order to prove that the system is broken? Then the minister tries to say: "Don't worry. We're only criticizing the system, we're not criticizing our teachers."

I think that we should be celebrating teachers across the world and here in Ontario. Let's value the full measure of their worth and let's respect the vital contribution that our teachers make to ensuring our young people have a quality education.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Seldom in this Legislature have I heard such a cynical and manipulative statement from a minister. This government is something like Mark Antony in the Shakespearean play, "He came to bury Caesar, not to praise him." This government has buried the teachers and now it's giving them faint praise.

This government, from the Premier on down, has systematically denigrated teachers and their role in society, their role in the education system, for two and a half years. The Premier has repeatedly said, and most recently to the chamber of commerce, that our students are mediocre, that our education system is mediocre, that we are not doing enough in the education system in this province. At the same time, because the government has found that the people of Ontario understand that teachers do indeed deserve praise, that they are hard-working, dedicated people who care about kids and care about making it possible for them to achieve to their full potential, the Conservatives are now going around saying, "We never really criticized teachers, we just criticized the union," or "We just criticized the system," or "The teachers are somehow caught in a terrible system that's depriving them of the ability to do what they would like to do for students." Talk about cynicism.

The government has stated that their changes to education mean more money in the classroom and more teachers. They've even said, because they put a cap on the average class size, that there are more teachers in the system, when in fact that is not the case. We just today had the publication of a survey done by the OSSTF of all of the public secondary schools in the province which indicates there are 2,000 fewer secondary public school teaching positions this year, as of October 5, than there would have been before the new funding formula and Bill 160.

1400

The government has these ads on TV right now which say: "We're only asking teachers to teach 25 minutes more. Is it too much to ask?" Well, the dispute about Bill 160 is not about 25 more minutes. Teachers offered to lengthen the periods to allow them to teach more minutes and the government said, "No, we don't want you to do that." The government said: "No, we don't want teachers to teach longer periods. We want them to teach one additional period." That means the dispute is not around 25 more minutes, it's around 25 more students. That's what the dispute is about. The government wants fewer teachers teaching more students, and that's what it's about.

The government wanted to take \$1 billion out of the education system, some 70% to 80% of the budgets of school boards is for staff, and the only way they can get that money out is by having fewer staff. That means fewer teachers teaching students; less time for teachers to do things like extracurricular activities; less time for them to do preparation for more classes; less time for them to do guidance counselling; less time to do remedial work with students who need extra help. Students and teachers have been deprived of the resources they need to ensure that Ontario students excel in this province.

It's time for this government to end the rhetoric and to put their money where their mouth is. It's time for the government to say, "We are going to invest in schools. We are going to invest in students. We are going to invest in teachers. We're going to ensure that we have the best system," rather than some kind of system that is on the average, which is what this government wants. It's time for us to value the role of teachers. It's time for us to respect the work that they do for our students in this province.

I ask for unanimous consent in celebration of World Teachers' Day for the House to agree that we should all put on one of these buttons emblematic of our respect for teachers, and to wear them for the rest of the day to show that not only do we respect teachers but we are prepared to give them the resources they need to help the students excel in Ontario the way that they used to and the way they could if we had a government that really believed in teachers.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent to wear the buttons? Agreed? No.

LEGISLATIVE INTERNS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'd like to take this opportunity to invite all members to welcome the 1998-99 Ontario legislative interns who are seated in the Speaker's gallery today. Welcome and good luck.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SCHOOLTEACHERS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, you've put out a background document today that tells the public that boards will need to hire more teachers. While you were putting out this background document, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation put out their survey of the real numbers of secondary school teachers who are teaching in the classrooms of our public secondary schools this year. Their survey shows the reality that there are 2,100 fewer secondary school teachers in public secondary schools alone. Is your statement simply wrong or did you really mean to say, "Some boards will need to hire

teachers but other boards will be cutting teachers," because of your inadequate funding?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I can assure you that some boards are hiring teachers. Let me give you some examples. The Toronto District School Board is hiring 990 elementary teachers. There's one example. York Region District School Board is hiring 117 secondary school teachers. The Simcoe county board is hiring 50. The Ottawa-Carleton board is hiring 150 secondary school teachers.

The funding formula allows more money for teachers. We have focused the money from the funding formula into the classroom so that indeed there's more money for all the activities in the classroom, including more teachers. Our estimate is that over the next three years there will be 3,000 more teachers in the system than there were last year.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Could I just ask the members in the third party who are wearing those buttons — we didn't get unanimous consent, so you'll have to take them off.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm not sure that there was understanding. The unanimous consent requested was to wear a button to celebrate World Teachers' Day. I would ask for unanimous consent again.

The Speaker: That's exactly what was asked for. I put the question and it didn't carry.

Ms Lankin: Would you test the House again?

The Speaker: I don't mind going back, but I'm sure I was very clear on the request and I've already put it. I think they're fairly firm on that, so let's move on.

Supplementary.

Mrs McLeod: For a man who likes to talk about his new mathematics curriculum, the Minister of Education is surprisingly reluctant to engage in either addition, subtraction or division. I have the background paper which the minister put out today, and the background paper does indeed say that the ministry estimates that boards hired more than 6,000 new teachers for September 1998. But the same background paper two lines further on says that the pension board has already received 9,500 notices of retirement this year. There seem to be some 3,500 teachers missing. I wonder why the minister wasn't prepared to subtract those two numbers. I wonder why the minister hasn't been prepared to look at enrolment growth numbers, because he says in his backgrounder that there will be funding for teachers required for enrolment growth. But there are 2,100 fewer secondary schoolteachers in our public secondary schools this September, and there are 5,000 more students in those same classrooms this September.

Minister, with 2,100 fewer teachers in secondary schools and 5,000 more students, how can you claim that you have provided more teachers for our students?

Hon David Johnson: The numbers are coming in from the boards. The numbers I gave you earlier and the numbers I give you now are numbers coming in from the school boards largely from towards the end of August. So

these numbers are still coming in, the boards are still reporting. We have not got the final numbers.

Hastings-Prince Edward, for example, is hiring over 100 teachers. The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board is hiring about 240 teachers. Yes, teachers are retiring and new teachers are coming on. The funding formula allows for more money in the classroom to hire teachers. I might say that the cap on the average class size is requiring that more classes be created and more teachers be hired — over the next three years, 3,000 new teachers in the system.

The Speaker: Stop the clock just for a minute. Could I just remind the member for Welland-Thorold that we didn't get unanimous consent for the buttons. I'd ask that you remove it now.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Point of order, Speaker: Does the fact that Steve Gilchrist denied us the right to wear these buttons —

The Speaker: Member for Welland-Thorold, I'd ask you to remove the button, please.

Final supplementary.

Mrs McLeod: If the minister wants to talk about future years, we need to talk about enrolment growth in future years; we need to talk about retirements in future years. I have to work with the paper the minister provided to the public today, in October 1998.

This minister likes to talk about opening new schools, but he doesn't like to talk about the 43 boards where they're going to be closing schools. He likes to talk about boards hiring new teachers, but he doesn't want to acknowledge the reality of the boards that are going to be losing teachers and how many fewer teachers there are going to be in our classrooms. You don't want to acknowledge the fact that you are replacing only some of the teachers who are retiring. By your own numbers you're only replacing some 6,000 of the 9,500 teachers who are retiring. You don't acknowledge the reality. The reality, real numbers: 2,100 fewer secondary school-teachers in public secondary school classrooms; 5,000 more students in those same classrooms. There are fewer teachers, with more students. Will you not finally acknowledge that this means less teacher time with every student?

Hon David Johnson: I can only reiterate that the funding formula has more monies for all of the categories in the classroom, including teachers, including supply teachers, including paraprofessionals, speech pathologists to support teachers, including librarians and guidance teachers — all of the above, more money.

Plus the fact that we have capped the average class size board by board so that the class sizes cannot continue to grow year after year as they have at the elementary level — and they've grown at the secondary level too — means that there will be more classes and, believe it or not, there is a teacher in every class. More classes, more teachers; 3,000 more teachers over the next three years. The teachers are already being hired. Over 250 in York region; board by board, more teachers.

1410

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I do hope the Minister of Health will be more forthcoming in responding to some of the realities that have been inflicted by the government in communities around Ontario, specifically, Minister, the cuts you've made to hospitals. You've cut hospitals in each and every community around the province. We've talked to you about Hamilton, about Ottawa. You've declined to take responsibility, just as your government has declined.

I want to ask you particularly about the impact that you've had on some of the new hospitals in this province, specifically a new hospital you opened with a lot of fanfare in Barrie, the Royal Victoria Hospital. It's open and it's got eight brand-spanking-new operating rooms. But only your government could turn that into a bad-news story because four of those operating rooms can't function. Why? They can't function because you won't pay the hospital enough money to use them. There's the heritage for your government right now: four empty operating rooms in Barrie.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mr Kennedy: Residents are having to leave to have babies delivered, to have cardiac surgery. Will you put a proper amount of money into the Royal Victoria Hospital and all the hospitals —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister of Health.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): To the member opposite, this government is very proud of its track record when it comes to health restructuring. Despite the fact that the federal government reduced our transfer payments by approximately \$2.5 billion, this government is very proud to have increased health service funding for people in this province by at least \$1.2 billion. We will continue to increase that funding each and every year in the future, because unlike the federal government, we recognize health services are a priority for people in this province.

We have been working with our partners in the hospital sector and we have been ensuring that our hospitals are structured in such a way that as we look at the future, we look at today, we look at the needs of the population that is changing and aging and growing rapidly, we are putting in place a continuum of care —

The Speaker: Answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: — which means that many of the services that have formerly been delivered in the hospitals will be available in the long-term-care sector —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, I don't know exactly where it is you plan for those surgeries in Barrie to be. They're not going to be in the community and they're not in those four operating rooms that you won't fund properly.

In not even a year's operation, they have a \$4.3-million deficit. They have a \$6-million deficit this year. It would be \$10 million except they've had to cut services and not

provide for people, so that people are backed up, as they are all over the province, in emergency rooms.

The same situation exists in a new hospital in Orangeville. You made a big to-do about opening a hospital and what have you done? You've got it running a \$1.6-million deficit. This big, bold government has just dumped its debt on to the hospitals, on to sick people in the province.

In Collingwood you're paying for a renovation. You've got 47 beds funded and you're building 70 beds. You've got 25 brand-new beds that you built with your money and you won't give them the money to staff the nurses.

Minister, again, will you take some responsibility, some —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister of Health.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I certainly hope that this information being presented today is a little different than some of the information in the past. I hear the member who represents the Orangeville community saying that the information as presented doesn't seem to be exactly as he recalls it to be.

We have been working very diligently with hospitals because we recognize that they have new and emerging needs. As you know, in order to address some of the situations in the province, we have set up a working group with the Ontario Hospital Association to ensure that where there are areas where there is a need for additional services to respond, we will have the appropriate resource allocation available to those hospitals, so in the very situation, the Orangeville situation, and situations across this province we are studying very carefully in conjunction with the OHA in order —

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr Kennedy: I just hope that in those various committees and task forces you have you're not tying up the valuable time of doctors and nurses who are needed in these communities, because what you have done is very simple. You have taken \$800 million from hospitals and you have foisted the cost of that — you don't know how to make them run more efficiently; instead you just dump the cost on the hospitals and on the patients, so that Maxine Ferguson's father in Collingwood went to emergency and was on a stretcher for two and a half days. An 83-year-old man found it impossible to sleep for two and a half days. When that man was admitted, he spent eight days in that hospital, showing how badly it was needed.

Minister, that's your fault. It certainly becomes your fault if you ignore your responsibilities. That hospital in Collingwood is running a deficit. So is the hospital in Orangeville and so is the one in Barrie. They're brand-new hospitals and you won't let them do their jobs —

The Speaker: Minister of Health.

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I say, we are very proud of the additional investments that we've made in health services. Let's go back to Simcoe county in particular. We know that we have invested more than \$6.7 million in the Simcoe county hospital priority program. We have invested in Healthy Babies, Healthy Children. We have invested in the Ontario drug benefit program. We have invested in community-based mental health services. We have moved

forward to strengthen the hospitals in Ontario in order that we can provide the services as close as possible to the homes of individuals. We have increased the number of MRIs, and there will be 35, and we're increasing dialysis centres across this province.

We are providing \$1.2 billion more in spending, and yet the federal government tells us —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question, third party.

SCHOOLTEACHERS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question for the Minister of Education and Training. Despite the comments of the minister and his colleagues over the last few months and weeks, the people of Ontario understand that the government's agenda on education is about cutting. It's about less money in the system, it's about fewer teachers and it's about fewer schools in the future.

How can the minister continue to maintain that there are more teachers in the system as a result of his reforms in the face of the evidence presented today by OSSTF which indicates that in the public high schools of Ontario there are 2,000 fewer teaching positions than there would have been prior to the government's changes in Bill 160 and the funding formula? Will the minister admit that the controversy around Bill 160 now is not about 25 more minutes' instruction, but about 25 more students per teacher, fewer teachers teaching more students and more classes?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): First of all, I want to say that the objective of the government is around quality. That is what the objective of the government is: quality in education. We need to improve the education system in Ontario. That speaks to issues such as the new curriculum, such as the new report card, such as the province-wide testing, such as the purchase of textbooks — some \$55 million worth of textbooks have been purchased; another \$45 million will be coming in the near future — such as capping the average class size and increasing the number of instructional days so that our students have the benefit of the same number of instructional days as students in other provinces. That's what the issue is.

In terms of the number of teachers, there was a statement at one time that there would be 10,000 teachers fired. Your party, I'm sure, and the Liberals said there would be 10,000 teachers fired. Now we see that the school boards are hiring teachers. Algoma is hiring over 70 teachers; the Rainbow District School Board is hiring over 100 teachers. Within three years there will be 3,000 more teachers in the system.

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Mr Wildman: The minister knows that he's not talking about net new positions; he's talking about replacement positions, and all those who have retired have not been replaced.

Fewer teachers means fewer options at the secondary level. Less funding also means fewer schools. The minister has indicated in a directive sent out on June 15,

"School consolidation decisions are to be finalized by board resolution, and appropriate alternative arrangements for the pupils in the schools to be consolidated are to be developed before December 31, 1998."

This government has set a deadline for closure of schools, with decisions to be made by the end of this calendar year. Then last week the minister said: "This government is not imposing any deadlines. There is no deadline regarding school closures for school boards." Which is the situation? Are you requiring school boards to make decisions about closing schools by the end of this year or not?

Hon David Johnson: Whether to close a school and when to close a school is the prerogative of the local school board, as it has been when your government was in power and when the Liberals were in power. Each and every year through your period in office and through the period when the Liberals were in office, schools were closed at the decision of the local school boards. They picked the time; they made the decision. In your case, over 100 schools were closed; in the case of the Liberals, about 140 schools were closed.

That remains the fact today. If school boards wish to diminish their capacity, then we have indicated that they let us know by the end of the year, if they wish to diminish their capacity for the purposes of the new pupil places. If they don't wish to, that's their choice. If they choose to close a school, that's their choice, and if they decide on a particular time to close the school, if they should so decide, that's their choice.

Mr Wildman: I guess they don't get the adjustment funding if they don't meet the deadline. I guess that's what the minister is saying, but it's up to them.

He says the decision is up to the school boards, but I have a letter here addressed to one of his colleagues, Mr Wilson, from one of his constituents, Jackie Knisley, an RN, in which she says: "In your busy schedule you found time to speak with me concerning Duntroon Central School, which yet again has been threatened with closure. When I mentioned this grave problem to you your words were, 'Oh, I won't let them close your school.'" She goes on to say they were extremely happy about this.

You've just said that the decision on school closures is local boards'. Is that really the case, or is it the case that the decisions result from the funding formula your government has set forward, and if anybody wants to stop a local board from closing a school, they should go and see you or one of your cabinet colleagues, who will then make the final decision?

Hon David Johnson: I'm not familiar with any particular letter. I'll only say that in terms of Simcoe county, for example, there are some \$5 million worth of monies which have been guaranteed to flow into Simcoe county to assist in terms of the construction of new schools in Simcoe county over the next number of years. Indeed, we expect that over the next three years there will be fairly close to 200 new elementary and secondary schools under construction in Ontario, providing accommodation for 120,000 students across the province and getting rid of a

good number of the portables in which students are accommodated at the present time. The Simcoe county budget is up. Their new pupil places budget is more than adequate.

This government has taken a bold initiative in terms of constructing more new schools than any other government in recent history.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): My question is to the Minister of Housing. A homeless man, Vernon Ross Crowe, died on the Toronto streets last Friday, I'm sure you will recall. People are dying because of the lack of appropriate affordable housing, and people who work with the homeless are very scared about what will happen this winter. The city of Toronto says they will have a shortage of 320 to 460 hostel beds this winter: 460 people who will have to sleep on the streets, not because they want to but because they have nowhere to go.

Minister, what are you going to do now, not sometime in the future, not after other task forces report, but now, to make sure no one freezes on our streets this winter?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'll refer the question to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): We've been working very closely with municipalities as we seek to find new ways to address the problems that those who find themselves homeless are experiencing. That's why we have maintained our funding for homeless shelters. We pay 80% of that. That has not been reduced; it is not being reduced. I think that demonstrates the commitment we have had to helping our municipal partners deal with what is a very serious issue.

Mr Marchese: I do not detect from this minister or the other minister of homelessness a scintilla of empathy for the people who are suffering on our streets, not one scintilla of empathy from either of those two ministers. We have a crisis and she, through her arrogance, says, "We are doing more than before," yet the crisis continues to worsen.

You should get out, Minister, with the other minister of homelessness and get away from Moore Park and Rose-dale once in a while. I urge you both, Ministers, to come and take a walk with me in the streets of not Rosedale but downtown Toronto to see the kind of tragedies we are experiencing. Will the both of you come and take a walk with me to see what I see on the streets of Toronto?

Hon Mrs Ecker: We have met with many of the agencies who deal with people who are homeless in this city and in other cities across the province. My parliamentary assistant, Mr Carroll, has been meeting with many municipalities and many community agencies who deal with this. He has received some very excellent feedback. He has met with Anne Golden, who, as you know, is doing the Toronto task force. Anne Golden is calling for a national coalition of provincial governments and municipal

governments to sit down with Ottawa to see how we can better address what is indeed a national problem.

But I would repeat that in this province not only do we cost-share 80% of that, and will continue to do that because we think it's an important support, but we are also helping to get more and more people off social assistance so they can afford accommodation. Some 304,000 fewer people are now on welfare than there used to be because of our reforms. We know they are in jobs. We know they are better off when they are employed. They're able to afford accommodation.

We will continue to push forward —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Final supplementary.

Mr Marchese: All this minister does, and it seems to be the same answer as last year: They continue to meet with people as the tragedy worsens. They have helped to make this tragedy worse than before through their direct policy of welfare slashing. The cancellation of social housing only means one thing: More and more people are on the streets.

Tomorrow evening, a non-partisan group I've helped put together will be asking all governments to put housing back on the public housing agenda.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: They laugh, but it's a tragedy they helped to worsen.

On Thursday, a community coalition, including famed scientist Ursula Franklin, will be asking all levels of government to declare homelessness a national disaster that needs serious public resources. Anne Golden in her interim report has called for 5,000 supportive housing units to be built in Toronto alone. You were wrong, Ministers, to get out of the business of housing, and unless you get back in, you will be directly responsible for the tragedies on the streets of Toronto. What are you going to do now about the tragedy, not down the line?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I appreciate the honourable member's concern for individuals who have found themselves homeless in this city and other cities across the country, but one of the objectives we have is not to simply build a whole bunch of new buildings where we found that the cost of that government housing was more than what was being paid in the private sector. What is important is to get those individuals into programs that will help them, get them off welfare and get them linked up with housing and accommodation.

As you know, with our homeless task force, we have increased funding to help with those supports. Mr Carroll will be coming back with further recommendations. We've been working with Anne Golden to see the recommendations she'll be coming forward with as we work with our municipalities to improve the supports for people who find themselves homeless, because we do know and we do recognize that it is an issue, it is a problem. These people need help. We also understand that there need to be better mental health supports too. As the stories in the Star are showing this week, mental health is also an important priority.

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ROAD SAFETY

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): My question is to the Minister of Transportation, who refuses to listen to the mayors, police chiefs and police commissions across the province who have repeatedly ask you, almost begged you, to allow the use of red light cameras to stop this epidemic at dangerous intersections. All your ministry can come up with are endless excuses and unworkable schemes like hiring private security guards to act as red light rent-a-cops to watch over an intersection. When will you stop stalling and start to listen and allow these cameras to be used so that accidents can be prevented and lives can be saved? When will you stop the stalling?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): I don't know what the honourable member is talking about. We have been working day and night and night and day to come up with a solution that is actually going to tackle the problem of aggressive driving and red light running in our province.

I had a superb meeting with the mayor of Toronto on Thursday. We agreed on three things: We agreed that there's a problem; we agreed that we had to work together to find a solution; we agreed that potentially part of that solution would be technology, but it has got to be combined with an education program and it has got to be combined with the maximum sanctions allowable by law, which means you've got to identify the driver.

If the honourable member has some solutions that have not been thought of, I'd welcome him to the table, because we want to have a solution that's not only going to be looking good rhetorically but is actually going to help solve the problem.

Mr Colle: At least we're getting somewhere. Finally the minister has agreed there is a problem, so we are getting somewhere. Secondly, I'll tell the minister that I had a private member's bill which proposed the solution of installing red light cameras. You blocked that bill.

I'll tell you, if you don't listen to the police chiefs and you don't listen to the mayors, why don't you listen to Mr Roger Laporte, who last year lost his 40-year-old son to a red light runner? He's asking you as the minister to stop with the politics, listen to ordinary citizens who have been hurt by your inaction and install the cameras. Will you listen to Mr Laporte, who doesn't want his son Michel to die in vain? He's saying to you: "Stop the stalling. Allow the cameras."

Hon Mr Clement: There have been some tragedies on our roads, some of them at intersections, absolutely right. We owe it to those victims to not only come up with what looks good maybe in the next day's newspaper or in a private member's resolution; we owe it to them to come up with the best solution possible that is going to tackle the problem. If I have to spend an extra day or an extra week to find that solution —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon Mr Clement: Our commitment as a government is to find the solution that focuses in on that red light runner. I couldn't agree more with the statement that was uttered in this House in 1993 that I read in part: "The other concern I have about this legislation is that the electronic monitoring and photo radar are aimed at the vehicle as opposed to the driver.... I think it takes it a step away, makes it less effective and is unfair when the ticket comes to the person who is the owner of that vehicle." I agree with that statement.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Who said it?

Hon Mr Clement: Who said it? Jim Bradley, the member for St Catharines. I agree with him; that is the right approach.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Are members allowed to mislead members of this House?

The Speaker: That's out of order. You can't say that.

Mr Bradley: I asked you —

The Speaker: No, there's no question. You're interfering.

Mr Bradley: — are members allowed to mislead the House?

The Speaker: Of course not.

Mr Bradley: Thank you. I'm glad to hear that.

Interjection: You were doing it for years.

The Speaker: I want to caution the members that I understand the question the member for St Catharines put, but I think it's a loaded question regardless of how you placed it. So I would caution members that isn't acceptable either, as well from the member for Cambridge; that's unacceptable too.

Mr Bradley: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: The minister, who has to consult with Preston Manning before he does anything, knows full well —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

New question.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. I want to say to the Minister of Transportation that in case he has forgotten, my colleagues and I are still in favour of photo radar, so I'll be very interested in what answer he has to my question about this issue of red light runners. Minister, whatever this is about — and of course everything we do is a little bit about politics — this issue is about saving lives.

I want to bring you back to where we are and, more important, where you are on this issue. I was a bit puzzled, I have to tell you. Late last week you had a meeting with Mayor Lastman. He comes out of the meeting and says, "We have an agreement to proceed with some pilot projects." I thought, "It's not as good as going ahead with full-flight legislation, but at least it's a step in the right direction." You come out of the same meeting and say, "There's no agreement." So where are we? Are you going to proceed with pilot projects, are you going to proceed in some way now rather than two or three or four

months from now to bring in legislation on this very important issue?

Hon Mr Clement: I'll say to the honourable member and to this House what I indicated to the mayor last Thursday, what I indicated to the mayor of Mississauga last Friday, what I would like to indicate to any other regional chair or mayor or member of this Legislature: We want to work together with people who have new, creative, workable, effective ideas that are going to get at this problem. Part of that solution is technology that was hitherto unavailable.

I would put to the members of this House that part of the solution has to be education, to get at the aggressive drivers and their techniques, to re-educate them on proper road techniques.

The third component of this has to be the maximum sanctions that are allowable under our laws, either the Highway Traffic Act or other acts, to target that red light runner and to deter that aggressive driving behaviour. The best way to do that is to identify the driver. We are working with our municipal colleagues, with my colleague the Solicitor General, with my colleague the Attorney General and with this caucus on a workable solution, and I invite him to the table as well.

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Mr Silipo: I'm glad to be invited to the table, but more important than that is that we need legislation, and we don't need it four months from now or five months from now. We quite frankly don't need it after somebody else has been seriously injured or killed at one of these intersections; we need it now. I want to reiterate to you the position we gave you last week, which is that we as an NDP caucus are prepared to facilitate the legislation going through in a quick way to ensure this issue gets dealt with.

Rather than discussing this and studying this behind closed doors, bring the information that you have, bring the draft legislation, bring it by next week, and we will facilitate the legislation going through the process of this House and getting this problem addressed. Will you do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Clement: I'm willing to sit down with the member or his caucus at any time. It may not involve legislation. There may be other ways we can get at this problem that do not involve legislation.

Speaking of legislation, though, I want to set the record straight in terms of the proactive nature of this government when it comes to this, as other issues. We increased the set fine for red light running to \$185. We increased the minimum fine to \$105. We established, through the Ministry of the Solicitor General, community safety zone legislation, which in turn doubles the fines for unsafe intersections yet again. These are the kinds of things we have done. We have increased the amount of money for community policing. My colleague Minister Runciman has been front and centre on that.

We've been talking the talk, we are willing to do more things to get at this problem, and we have been walking the walk more so than any other government in the history of this province, and we are proud of that record.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): My question is directed to the Minister of Community and Social Services and it concerns the whole issue which the opposition has brought up several times when people exit the social welfare system of this province and what happens to them. I would like to know, Minister, based on Ekos Research Associates —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Just give the opportunity for the member to place his question, please.

Mr Hastings: Many times in the past members of the opposition parties have wanted to know what happened to these people — where did they go? So we have now come up with some good research from Ekos Research Associates —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr Hastings: See, they don't want to know. It's too bad we get interruption here all the time when we want to ascertain what the facts are. What I'd like to hear from the minister is what are the specific facts dealing with the research of some 2,041 people who were on social dependency of social assistance in this province, where did they go, and what specific individual choices did they make, based on that survey?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I understand the opposition's concern about not wanting to hear good news, but neither of the two opposition parties, when they were in government, thought it was important enough a question to ask when people were leaving social assistance.

We've had over 300,000 fewer people trapped on welfare since we came into government. We've done two surveys already; we're planning on doing more. It's interesting that the survey company, the independent and very reputable survey company, which also did work for the two parties across the way — they didn't have any problems with the survey company's credibility at that time. What that survey has found both times we've done it is that the vast majority of people who are leaving welfare are doing it because they're going into jobs, which is exactly what we want to see. And not just any jobs. Most of them are going into full-time jobs and they're going into jobs that are paying much more than the minimum wage, so our economic reforms and our welfare reforms are doing what people on welfare want and what taxpayers want, getting more people off welfare into paid jobs.

Mr Hastings: It would be interesting to follow up in terms of a certain intolerance of wishing to learn about the facts when you've already made up your mind, from the members opposite. What can we expect in the future based on the present trends of the last two specific surveys? What are your expectations of the third one in terms of the reasons people are leaving social welfare, of whom those people across there would have probably 800,000 now?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Again I can understand why the opposition has some difficulty talking about people leaving welfare, since during their 10-year period in power we ended up with the highest per capita number of people on welfare this province had ever seen in its history. We are reversing that trend by helping people get into paid jobs, which is certainly where they want to be.

As I mentioned, over 300,000 have left. As I have travelled around the province, I have met with municipal officials, people on social assistance who are participating in Ontario Works and finding it a very helpful, useful program. I have also met many individuals who have actually got employment through the support and the reforms we have given them. I recently met with the regional chairs who pledged their commitment and support to a program that they believe is working and that they believe we should be doing more with.

Recently I was in Orillia with my colleague from Simcoe East, where we got to meet a group of individuals who were on social assistance who had actually created a whole tourist support facility there in the community of which they were extremely proud, and they were actually getting employment offers because of the contacts they had made.

SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. I want to ask you about the crisis in our schools and school space in particular in the Ottawa-Carleton area. I would like to quote Ron Larkin, who is the chair of the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic District School Board where 25% of students are currently spending their whole day in portables. He says, "By any standards this is a crisis, and it's the result of underfunding and will only get worse due to the fact that the funding formula released by the ministry is totally inadequate."

We have in this board a massive number of kids in portables. There are 347 portables housing 9,000 students — that's more students than some school boards have in total — and your ministry says that this board has 6,000 surplus pupil spaces. The formula doesn't recognize the space for adult education, for ESL or even for a school for unwed mothers who are being trained so that they can go back to work, so you're preventing some of them from getting a proper education.

Will you and your government take some responsibility for the crisis you've created, by restoring the necessary funding and pushing back the —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Minister.

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I can only say that this government has created a fair formula which allocates money across Ontario on the basis of need. The member opposite may not be happy with the funding formula which allocates about 200 new schools over the next three years to accommodate about 120,000 students.

To quote the director of York Region District School Board, "It is wonderful news for us." That's one board that's happy. To quote the secondary school students, "This money will be helpful in solving problems such as overcrowded classrooms in schools," that from the president of the Ontario Secondary School Students' Association.

We are attempting to deal as fairly as possible with the students' needs all across the province.

1450

Mr Patten: Minister, I asked you about the Ottawa-Carleton area. Mr Larkin again said, "It's apparent that this government doesn't understand the educational requirements of the students of the Ottawa-Carleton area." They made a proposal to you in May, and I'd like to ask you why you or your ministry never responded and listened to their recommendation. They said you should have a special fund for capital needs, take the growth challenges and deal with those separately and take what you call surplus space and look at that, because that's in the core part of cities. You put them all in one big pot, and you know what? Everybody loses. The rural areas and the downtown cores of the cities are pitted against the suburbs, so nobody wins in this situation.

Many of those schools are being utilized, for ESL, incredible programs that are going on, and somebody here on Bay Street decides that in that particular area nothing is happening. Those people don't have an identity. They have no existence. You're saying numbers rule the day, and then you say it's the board's decision. It's your decision because of your funding formula. Will you accept some responsibility for it?

Hon David Johnson: I will say that in the Catholic high school system there is a school opening, for example, in Barrhaven later this month.

Interjection.

Hon David Johnson: The member didn't mention that in his remarks. I'm surprised the member conveniently forgot about that.

In the Catholic district school board in Ottawa-Carleton, there is almost \$2 million flowing, which will support schools 10 times the value, to the tune of about \$20 million worth of schools in the Ottawa-Carleton district.

Never before in the history of Ontario has there been the kind of construction that is about to begin in the province, supported by this funding formula. Will it solve every board's problem everywhere in Ontario? Obviously it won't solve every problem in every board in Ontario, but there will be \$800 million worth of construction beginning this year, \$1.5 billion worth of construction within the next three years and 120,000 students accommodated. That will be the biggest project in the history of Ontario.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is for the Attorney General. Last week I asked the minister responsible for women's issues about cuts in your ministry

which could put some women in serious danger. Women who are victims of domestic assault are now personally responsible for serving restraining orders from family court on the very men who abuse them. Remarkably, she didn't know what I was talking about.

To clarify, I have a memo from your ministry dated July 26, 1996. In that memo, you told the court to no longer serve documents for women who can't afford a lawyer. This document does say that there should be exceptions made for cases where personal safety is feared. Minister, don't you understand what this issue is about? All restraining orders are about personal safety, and in some cases women are having to serve them or be responsible for serving them themselves.

I ask you today, will you make sure the courts don't put women at risk a second time? Will you change this directive immediately so that all women can feel safe, knowing they don't have to confront their abusers a second time?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I appreciate the question from the member. I'd like to advise the member that we have prepared guidelines for non-represented litigants on how documents are to be served. The options include personal service, if someone else can do it, either through a friend, a relative, a lawyer or a private process server. Private process servers are available to serve these documents at the same cost that sheriffs traditionally serve documents and are available through the court system and can be accessed through the court system.

I might also tell the member that documents can also be served by mail. That is a very viable way of serving documents.

Certainly, as the member quite accurately says, in certain circumstances where there are non-represented litigants, the ministry will continue to serve these documents through arrangements with the local sheriff. We have taken a look at a number of options, and they do exist. I appreciate the question from the member.

Ms Churley: Minister, you still don't get it, do you? The week before last a woman was actually told by the court in Belleville that she was responsible for serving both the restraining order and the custody order on her abuser herself. It is her responsibility to find a way to deliver that. We were told by the clerk in Etobicoke that the court does not ever serve any restraining orders.

This is unacceptable, Minister, and I'm asking you today to look into it and do something about it. It is happening out there. This is one issue in a complex web of programs and services women face when seeking safety and justice.

The inquest into the death of Arlene May told your government that you should set up a steering committee to help you through this maze of programs and legal jurisdictions so that abused women are better protected. You haven't moved an inch on this yet. You're supposed to be getting in touch with advocates and front-line workers, and you haven't done it.

Will you commit today, three months after the May-Iles recommendations were given to you and after —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, member for Riverdale. Member for Riverdale, come to order, please.

Hon Mr Harnick: I can tell the member that we have moved on setting up that committee. That committee is in fact being set up and is operating. I can tell the member that we have started to comply with a number of the jury's recommendations: increasing funding for specialized services for abused women, enhancing funding for legal aid, doubling the number of victim/witness assistance programs, creating eight new specialized domestic violence courts, expanding the use of domestic assault review teams, and crowns receiving extensive and ongoing training.

I can also tell the member that she is quite right that the sheriff no longer serves these documents. That information, as conveyed by court representatives, is accurate. It is also true that the serving of documents can now be done in exactly the same way as it was done before, using private process servers or the mail. If that is not clear or if the member feels that has not been properly conveyed, I will look into that and make sure the information is being conveyed to people. I appreciate the member's help.

AMATEUR SPORT

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. In June of this year, Variety Village, which is in my riding, hosted the Ontario Games for the Physically Disabled. They were a great success. I'd like to thank the ministry and congratulate Variety Village.

Recently, the 31st annual sports awards recognized the contributions of Ontario's best amateur athletes, coaches, volunteers and corporate citizens. I know the province is providing opportunities for Ontarians to excel in amateur sports. Minister, what other events and activities took place over the summer to further develop amateur sport in Ontario?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I want to thank the member for Scarborough West for his question. Certainly there are many things we're doing in recreation. I want to congratulate, first of all, Variety Village for putting on the games, and everybody who attended. I know the minister for children, the member for Mississauga South, was there, as well as the member for Scarborough West.

One of the things that I wanted to say we are doing is to focus attention on athletes in this province. At the Sky-Dome just two weeks ago we honoured our outstanding athletes in this province. We also honoured our coaches, our volunteers and our administrators. As you know, that is one of the bases of sports in this province. Elvis Stojko and Joanne Malar won athletes of the year for 1997, and I want to commend them.

One of the other things that we have done over the summer — we have had, as you mentioned, the games for the physically disabled in Toronto, but also the Summer Games in Guelph, the Ontario Special Olympics in

Sudbury, and the Ontario Senior Games in Windsor, all of which brought together communities, brought together athletes. It focused attention on athletes and what they can do and it set new records. I think this helps Ontarians see what we can do for our amateur athletes across the province.

Mr Jim Brown: My daughter participated in the Winter Games last winter, and Variety Village was such an exciting event, but we're talking about elite and high-performance athletes. What is your ministry doing about normal people who don't have the high-performance aspect?

Hon Ms Bassett: I want to reply to the supplementary from the member for Scarborough West. Certainly we in the Ministry of Recreation focus on making and helping Ontarians to be physically active. As you know, being physically active makes you healthier, better thinkers, better citizens, better everything, and as you get older, it works to your advantage to stay fit.

We are trying to encourage people, especially our youth, to start getting involved in sport as soon as they can. Through the government's recreation development fund, we support initiatives in smaller rural communities, aboriginal communities and local area service boards. These initiatives will help get our kids involved in sport and recreation at an early age, whereas otherwise they might not have been able to do any of this kind of thing.

A second focus we have is getting Ontarians active. If we want to be healthy and productive well into our senior years, the reality is that we've got to recognize that we're not. Only 1% of Ontarians work out. We've got to start. We are helping them focus on exercising regularly.

1500

HIGHWAY 3 BYPASS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. It has happened again. The headline in the Windsor Star today says the Essex bypass is a death trap.

In answer to my question on Thursday, your reply was, "This ministry has just initiated plans to initiate a planning study to develop a strategy for the future transportation needs of this particular section of Highway 3, including the possibility of future widening." Minister, that answer was, frankly in my view, not very clear. Could you tell me, in view of the fact that there has been another accident over the weekend in which three people were injured, what you might do?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): I thank the honourable member for the question. Upon reflection, after hearing what you've just repeated back to me, I was somewhat inelegant in my phraseology, and I apologize for that.

There will be a planning study for that particular section of Highway 3, and part of the engineering, part of the study, will look at potentially widening and other methods, which perhaps you and I can't think of on the floor of the Legislature today, to make that road safer.

Mr Crozier: Thank you, Minister, I appreciate that. Just to emphasize what we're talking about, the Essex OPP did a blitz last week on this stretch of highway. They stationed as many as five cruisers on the highway during morning and afternoon rush hours. The officers handed out 150 tickets, 35 warnings and arrested two impaired drivers over the five days. We need this kind of enforcement in the short term every day.

Minister, in view of what you also said last Thursday, where you said, "If there's a way that we can improve the safety on this particular road, I believe that we can work together to do that," as I have in the past, I'll work with you, your ministry officials and, as you've suggested, anyone else to stop this carnage. I know you have my support, and I hope you will accept that.

Hon Mr Clement: I can say to this House, indeed, that we have a strong track record of working with the local area politicians to improve Highway 3. It was just this summer, in fact, that the honourable member and Jack Carroll, the member for Chatham-Kent, and the local mayor of Leamington worked together for the Highway 3 bypass, which in fact had been a long-awaited project for that area which is not only going to improve the economic viability of that area but also the safety of that area. In the spirit of that co-operation, I believe we can co-operate in this matter as well.

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. People in East York are very concerned about cuts in service to the Mortimer bus line. The TTC is threatening to cut service from the present 20-minute service to a whopping 40-minute wait for night service and all day Sunday. There are a lot of seniors in East York. The Mortimer bus line runs the whole route from one end of East York to the other. The street is dark and deserted, often, at night. There aren't that many businesses. Your government has cut all subsidies to the TTC. It is the most undersubsidized public transportation system in North America. As a result of your cuts, the TTC is now threatening to raise fares and cut services for the people of East York and across this city. What are you going to do about it? Are you going to reinstate some of that funding so we can save these vital services for our citizens?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): I thank the honourable member for the question. I can tell her two things: First, in terms of capital funding, I don't believe the TTC can shed any tears, except perhaps crocodile tears, because as part of this budget Minister Eves and this ministry were able to cut a cheque for \$829 million for capital funding for the TTC. We're very proud of that commitment that we made. That money is flowing.

Second, on operating, with due respect to the honourable member, this government gave the municipalities \$2.5 billion worth of tax room by taking half the education off the property tax. That is more than enough money to settle this problem as well as many other problems.

PETITIONS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I have a petition.

"We, the undersigned taxpayers of Ontario, believe that the timeline established by the Ministry of Education and Training for the implementation of school closures and consolidations to qualify for funding under the grant for new pupil places is inadequate for appropriate consultation and effective decision-making. The effect of the compressed timeline means that boards who have established processes of appropriate consultation for major decisions of this nature are forced to short-circuit their own processes or lose access to significant and necessary funding.

"We, the undersigned taxpayers of Ontario, ask the ministry to reconsider its deadline of December 31, 1998, to allow adequate time for boards, schools and parents to make these painful decisions in an effective and considered way."

It's signed by a large number of concerned parents, and I have affixed my signature in full agreement.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition regarding the Workers' Health and Safety Centre.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas each year in Ontario approximately 300 workers are killed on the job, several thousand die of occupational diseases and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas during the past decade the Workers' Health and Safety Centre proved to be the most cost-effective WCB-funded prevention organization dedicated to worker health and safety concerns; and

"Whereas the WCB provides over 80% of its legislated prevention funding to several employer-controlled safety associations and less than 20% to the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre recently lost several million dollars in funding and course revenue due to government changes to legislated training requirements; and

"Whereas 30% of Workers' Health and Safety Centre staff were laid off due to these lost training funds; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre now faces an additional 25% cut to its 1998 budget, which will be used to augment new funding for employer safety associations in the health, education and services sector; and

"Whereas the WCB's 1998 planned baseline budget cuts for safety associations and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre will be disproportionately against the workers' centre and reduce its 1998 budget allocation to less than 15% of the WCB prevention funding,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the WCB's proposed cuts and

direct the WCB to increase the Workers' Health and Safety Centre's funding to at least 50% of the WCB's legislated prevention funding; and

"Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the WCB to significantly increase its legislated prevention funding in order to eliminate workplace illness, injury and death."

I proudly add my name to those of these petitioners.

DOCTORS' SERVICES

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): In keeping with your directions, Mr Speaker, I will not give a political speech as I read my petition. It's from the citizens of Wallaceburg, about 2,800 of them. Basically, it asks that their community have equal access to physician services, the same as those enjoyed by larger urban centres, and that serious visible measures be put in place immediately to address the physician shortage crisis.

I proudly affix my signature.

1510

HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The petition reads as follows:

"Since the Hotel Dieu Hospital has played and continues to play a vital role in the delivery of health care services in St Catharines and the Niagara region; and

"Since Hotel Dieu has modified its role over the years as part of a rationalization of medical services in St Catharines and has assumed the position of a regional health care facility in such areas as kidney dialysis and oncology; and

"Since the Niagara region is experiencing underfunding in the health care field and requires more medical services and not fewer" medical "services; and

"Since Niagara residents are required at present to travel outside of the Niagara region to receive many specialized services that could be provided in city hospitals and thereby not require local patients to make difficult and inconvenient trips down our highways to other centres; and

"Since the Niagara hospital restructuring committee used a Toronto consulting firm to develop its recommendations and was forced to take into account a cut of over \$40 million in funding for" the operation of "Niagara hospitals when carrying out its study; and

"Since the population of the Niagara region is older than that in most areas of the province and more elderly people tend to require more hospital services;

"We, the undersigned, request that the government of Ontario keep the election commitment of Premier Mike Harris not to close hospitals in our province, and we call upon the Premier to reject any recommendation to close Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement with the contents of this petition.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the Harris government's 'downloading' to municipal taxpayers is directly responsible for the \$36.3-million shortfall to the region of Hamilton-Wentworth; and

"Whereas the Harris government 'downloading' is directly responsible for creating a property tax crisis in our region; and

"Whereas the Harris government, while boasting about its 30% tax cut which benefits mainly the wealthy, is making hard-working families, seniors, homeowners and businesses pay the price with outrageous property tax hikes and user fees for services; and

"Whereas city and regional councillors are being unfairly blamed and forced to explain these huge tax hikes, Hamiltonians know that what's really going on is that they are being forced to pay huge property tax increases to fund Harris's 30% tax giveaway to the rich; and

"Whereas homeowners, including seniors and low-income families, are facing huge property tax increases ranging from several hundred to thousands of dollars; and

"Whereas the Harris government 'downloading' has led to huge property tax increases for business that will force many small and medium-sized businesses in Hamilton-Wentworth to close or leave the community, putting people out of work; and

"Whereas Hamilton-Wentworth region is proposing that the Harris government share in the costs of an expanded rebate program, worth about \$3 million region-wide;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Harris government immediately eliminate the \$38-million downloading shortfall that is devastating and angering homeowners as well as killing businesses in Hamilton-Wentworth."

I support this petition, so I add my name to it.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): I have a petition as well relating to property tax, but this is for the removal of what's popularly known as the Ted tax in Flamborough. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the town of Flamborough has placed \$639,000 of a \$1.354-million provincial grant into the Borer's Creek reserve fund;

"Whereas the town of Flamborough's diversion of \$639,000 into a Borer's Creek fund will result in an approximate 5.71% property tax increase;

"Whereas the town of Flamborough, by returning the said \$639,000 to the Flamborough property taxpayers as intended by the province, will result in an approximate 5% property tax decrease;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take the steps necessary to ensure that the \$1.354-million grant paid by the province of Ontario to the town

of Flamborough be applied for the purposes it was intended for, thereby ensuring that the residents of Flamborough not be subjected to unfair property tax increases."

I agree with this petition and I sign it accordingly.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has announced its intention of dumping the financing for ambulances, social housing and public health care services on to the backs of municipalities; and

"Whereas this irresponsible action will create a shortfall of more than \$18 million for local governments in St Catharines and the Niagara region; and

"Whereas local representatives in St Catharines and the Niagara region will be forced to either raise property taxes by as much as \$200 per household or cut services; and

"Whereas Mike Harris called municipal representatives 'whiners' when they tried to explain to him that his proposal was unfair and would create gaps in important services such as the delivery of public health care services; and

"Whereas the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing accused local representatives of being opportunistic simply because they attempted to point out that the Mike Harris proposal was unfair and primarily designed to fund his ill-advised tax scheme; and

"Whereas the Harris government refuses to listen to the representatives who work most closely with their constituents, those being the municipal representatives;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Mike Harris government to scrap its downloading plan, which will cause either an increase in property or an unacceptable cut to important and essential local services."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement with this petition.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition regarding health care funding in Hamilton-Wentworth.

"Whereas the Harris funding cutbacks are having a devastating impact on hospitals and patient care across Ontario, and have resulted in an anticipated \$38-million deficit at the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals; and

"Whereas the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals will receive \$4 million less in revenue from the Ministry of Health and other sources; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris funding cuts are causing a crisis in hospital care in Hamilton-Wentworth, with hospitals facing huge deficits, cuts to patient care and bed closings; and

"Whereas Scott Rowand, president of the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp's hospitals, spoke out recently in the

Hamilton Spectator, saying, 'For the first time in my career, I don't know how to fix this problem other than an awful lot of closures of programs and services needed by the community'; and

"Whereas Mr Rowand went on to say: 'We need more cash in the system and we need it now. And that is cash to deal with the issues that we are dealing with today. Don't ask us to do anything more because the people in the system are at their limit.'

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Harris government stop underfunding Ontario's hospitals to fund tax cuts for the wealthy and act immediately to restore funding to the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals so they can continue providing quality health care services to the people of Hamilton-Wentworth."

I proudly support these petitioners.

SCHOOL SPORTS

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I have a petition that was brought to my attention by Moe Ajram, president, and Kari Coish, the vice-president of the Williams athletic council. It reads as follows:

"We, the students at Dr G.W. Williams Secondary School, feel that sports are essential at our school as well as others. They build many new friendships while we are learning great skills. We enjoy all aspects of high school sports and we are very upset that they are being jeopardized this year.

"Sports have always played a role in the school environment and we are not willing to give them up now."

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Mike Harris has imposed skyrocketing taxes on small business owners in Windsor because of his government's downloading debacle;

"Whereas many small business owners in Windsor who pay commercial property taxes face increases of more than 100%;

"Whereas the Harris government tax assessment system is confusing, chaotic and an administrative nightmare for municipalities;

"Whereas the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers called the Harris tax assessment system a 'high-risk strategy' that will create 'serious problems' for taxpayers and municipalities; and

"Whereas Windsor small businesses facing massive tax increases will be forced to pass on these increases to their customers, causing a decrease in business and causing the Ontario economy to suffer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to devise a fair and uncomplicated system of tax assessment."

I join the members of the Pillette Road business improvement area in my riding in signing this petition.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition regarding the keeping of young offenders' services professional and public.

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services, the Honourable Janet Ecker, has announced that she will sell the services and programs at Ontario's secure custody facilities for high-risk young offenders to the private sector; and

"Whereas this decision will move these important services away from the government's responsibility to ensure the safety and security of the public, the young people in their charge and the workers who supervise and provide treatment to young offenders; and

"Whereas we believe strongly that elected officials should be directly accountable and responsible for all children and adults who are in custody as ordered by the courts of Ontario and that no private company should profit from crime;

"Therefore, we urge the minister to keep our secure and treatment facilities for young offenders professional and public."

I add my name to those of these petitioners.

AVORTEMENT

M. Bob Wood (London-Sud): I have a petition signed by 115 people.

«Étant donné que le système de santé en Ontario est surchargé, et qu'il faut couper des dépenses ;

«Étant donné que la grossesse n'est ni maladie ni blessure, et que les avortements ne sont pas des procédés médicaux ;

«Étant donné que la majorité des avortements se font pour des raisons de convenance ou de finance ;

«Étant donné que le gouvernement provincial possède l'autorité exclusive pour décider quels services seront assurés ;

«Étant donné que le "Canada Health Act" n'exige pas qu'il faut payer des procédés facultatifs ;

«Étant donné que des évidences considérables montrent que l'avortement peut nuire à la santé des femmes ;

«Étant donné que les citoyens d'Ontario ont payé plus de 45 000 avortements en 1993, à un prix de 25 \$ millions ;

«Alors nous, les soussignés, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de cesser de fournir des fonds publics pour payer des avortements.»

Le Président suppléant (M. Gilles E. Morin): Je vous félicite, monsieur le député, de la qualité de votre français.

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 63, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to instructional time, when Bill 63 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time, the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That no deferral of the second reading vote pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted; and

That the order for third reading of the bill shall then immediately be called and the remainder of the sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At 5:55 pm or 9:25 pm, as the case may be on such day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That the vote on third reading of the bill may, at the request of any chief whip of a recognized party in the House, be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceedings "Deferred Votes"; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceeding on the bill, the divisional bell shall be limited to five minutes.

Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to share the time equally between the three parties; and that the government speakers will lead off and whatever time is remaining shall be reserved for the member for Middlesex, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, to speak last in the debate, whatever time is remaining in our fair share of the third of the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: Mr Speaker, I wish to share the time as well with the member for Wentworth North and the member for Scarborough Centre.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): I'll be speaking for approximately 10 minutes. I'd like to address what's happening locally with the proposed changes under Bill 160 and instructional time with reference to the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board.

I noted this summer hearing many times the commercials from the various teacher union organizations that the education system was in disarray and was not going to be as good this year as last year. These ads basically said, and I think everybody in Ontario heard them over and over again, that if the teachers are teaching an extra class, from six to eight and now they're teaching seven out of eight periods, how could that improve public education, that if teachers had to teach an extra 30 students a day, how could that improve public education? I have to say that listening to those ads, if you believed that, that would be a

disturbing development, and frankly the answer to the rhetorical question would be that these changes can't possibly help public education.

What I've decided to do, rather than deal with the rhetoric from either side, is to deal with what's happening locally with the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board as a result of changes to Bill 160.

What's happening there is that there is now funding for the Catholic system equal to the public system. When I was a parliamentary assistant in education, which seems like a long time ago now, I would go to the schools, and I discovered that the Catholic system was funding the public system. There was about \$1,000 less for each and every student available to the Catholic system than there was in the public system.

Now the government has addressed that situation and given equal funding. It doesn't matter whether you're public or Catholic, it doesn't matter whether you're in Ottawa, Hamilton, Toronto or northern Ontario; basically the same monies are available to you as a student. That is fair. I recall going through numerous committee hearings where everybody conceded that was the fair thing to do, but no government has had the courage to deal with the problem. That was finally addressed by Bill 160.

In practical terms, how does that affect the children in my area in the Catholic district school board? It affects them in this manner: First of all, the Catholic board got an extra \$6.5 million in funds provided to them. That's somewhat contradictory to the notion of the opposition that there's \$1 billion cut out of the education system, that the whole purpose of Bill 160 was to take money out of the system. Frankly, that's just not happened.

The amount being spent on education when I was parliamentary assistant was \$14.1 billion. I noted from the Ministry of Finance figures, which have been audited now, that this year there's \$14.4 billion going to be spent in education, and it's anticipated that next year \$15 billion will be spent on education. So the amount of spending on education is going up and not down.

I can say, quite frankly, that we did try to take money out of the education system. When I was there, we told the boards to cut \$440 million out of their budgets, and that basically just did not happen. The boards were unwilling to find administrative savings. That's what they were instructed to do. They took two approaches: One was to fire young teachers, and/or they raised taxes in their area.

One of the areas where that did not happen was in the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board, where Pat Daly, who is the head of the board, took a personal pay cut himself. He scoured his budget and found administrative savings so that in that school board, despite the cuts, there were no impacts in the classroom at all. This was a board that was spending approximately \$1,000 less per student than its public equivalent.

To move forward to today and what happened this year, as I have indicated, as a result of Bill 160 this board got an extra \$6.5 million, which tends to confirm that there is more money being spent on education than in the past and

contradicts the fact that \$1 billion has been taken out of the system.

What happened with that \$6.5 million? As I've indicated previously, half of it went to increase salaries and benefits to local Catholic teachers employed by the board, and the other half went to buy books, went to pay for extra resource teachers, went to pay for extra elementary teachers and went to pay for the fixing up of two schools that were in bad shape.

1530

Now I would like to address the issue of instructional time.

Are the Catholic teachers in our area teaching an extra class? The answer is that, yes, they are, but only for half of the year because they have a semester system in the Catholic system in the Hamilton area.

Are they teaching an extra 30 students? I'll go into the details of it in a moment, but the fact of the matter is that they are not teaching an extra 30 students. After the changes were all said and done and Mr Daly in his innovative fashion, as usual, looked at the budget and re-arranged class size, in fact this year the Catholic teachers in our area are teaching two students fewer than they did last year, so they have fewer students to teach than last year and have more time to deal with the work for each and every student.

How has that happened? What has happened is that the government, through Bill 160, has legislated a secondary school maximum average class size of 22 and an average teacher instructional time of 1,250 minutes per week, which is still less than the average being taught by most secondary school teachers in the rest of the country. This is what Mr Pat Daly has done with the extra money that has been provided to him.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was counting the numbers in this place, and there is no quorum. Could you check, please.

The Acting Speaker: Would you please verify if we have quorum.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Wentworth North.

Mr Skarica: Twenty-two members in the House, including yourself, Mr Speaker, which is the average number of students in the classes in the Hamilton-Wentworth schools in my area. What Mr Daly has done using the tools in Bill 160 and the extra monies provided to him is this: He has reduced the average of the board's class size — last year it was 26 — to 22 this year. This results in at least 450 additional classes to enhance student timetable choices and enrich learning opportunities.

He has asked teachers, on average, to teach an additional 24 minutes per day. This means that the teachers have to teach seven classes, four in one semester and three in the other semester, over the year. This meets the requirement for minimum teaching time as outlined in Bill

160, but really has no impact on the students in the classroom.

Mr Marchese: How do you know?

Mr Skarica: One of the reasons I know they are not being impacted is the following statistic, which strangely enough no one in the opposition has ever bothered to mention: Last year in the Catholic system in my area, the teachers were teaching six classes, an average 26 students, which numbers 156 students. However, this year, even with the additional class — that's seven classes times 22 students — the teacher's workload is 154 students, which is exactly two students fewer. Six classes times 26 is 156, and seven times 22, according to the math I took way back when, is 154. That's exactly two students fewer. So even after the changes, even though there is an extra 24 minutes of teaching time, what has happened is that teachers have actually fewer students in their classroom by a dramatic amount.

Four students out of 26 is approximately 15% to 20% fewer students to teach for each and every teacher per class; in fact, the totals are that there are fewer students now for them to mark, fewer students they have to deal with, so that means there is more time for each and every student after the changes.

Another thing I heard many times in the two years of committee hearings was that there was an agenda against teachers, that what the Tory government wanted to do was take money out of education and what was going to happen was that there were going to be dramatic losses in the teaching profession. During the Bill 160 hearings and during the protests, I heard from teachers over and over again, "We're going to lose jobs," or "There are going to be dramatic job losses in my area." I heard the number 10,000 teachers province-wide, and I don't know how many that would translate to but that would definitely be several hundred in the Hamilton area.

The fact of the matter is that in our area, in the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board, not one teacher will lose his job due to these changes. After the changes in Bill 160, there has been no impact in the classroom other than 24 minutes of instructional time, there have been fewer students assigned to each and every teacher, and no teacher will lose his job. I think that's a pretty fair balance in trying to deal with both fiscal responsibility and making sure that our children get a good education.

I'd like to take what Mr Daly has done and contrast it to what the teachers would have liked to have done with Bill 160 and the instructional time issue. What the teachers would have liked to have done — this was in their demands — was teach six classes, period, just like last year. This would have resulted in the need to hire 65 additional teachers to the board at a cost of approximately \$2.5 million. At the same time that they didn't want to teach any extra time, the reason the board would have to hire all these extra teachers is that there are fewer students in each and every class, so really what was happening was if the teachers had got their way or the unions had got their way — I always try to distinguish between union

demands and what the rank-and-file teacher would like — the teachers wanted to keep the same number of classes. They would have been teaching fewer students, which would have cost the board about \$2.5 million.

That leaves an extra \$4 million, and what the teachers' union wanted the board to do was spend that \$4 million on raises for the teachers, which would have cost the board an extra \$4.5 million and would have resulted in a 15% increase over two years. It also would have meant there would have been no money available for books for these kids. There would have been no extra resource money available, no money for hiring extra elementary teachers, no money available to fix the schools that were in bad shape, basically no money available to help children out in the classroom. It would have all gone to extra salaries and benefits. That is what has been happening in our classrooms for probably the last 20 to 30 years.

When I went around the province, I was amazed at the fact that when you went into the Catholic schools, which were spending \$1,000 less per student than the public system, they both looked the same. When we went to the classrooms, you couldn't tell any difference. Basically what was happening in the public system was that most of the extra money wasn't going to the kids, because I didn't see any extra books, I didn't see any extra facilities. In fact, one of the nicest high schools and one of the best-equipped high schools I saw was St Mary's high school in Hamilton. They had a fabulous video room, a media room that was incredibly well equipped, the best I saw in the province. The difference was that this extra money was being spent by the public system on extra administration costs and extra salaries and benefits. It's interesting to note that there was the extra money then put into the Catholic system to equalize it to the public system, the unionized sector wanted all of that money for itself, even to the detriment of the kids, because there would have been no money available for books, there would have been no money available for resources for elementary teachers or to fix up the classroom itself.

1540

Another proposal of the Catholic unions in my area was that while they were prepared all right to do a little extra for the extra 15% in salary, what they proposed for instructional time — they wanted to keep to the six out of eight but they were prepared to do extra instructional time — lunchroom supervision was to be counted as instructional time. Hallway monitoring was instructional time. How lunchroom supervision or advanced lunchroom supervision would help the kids to prepare for the global economy is something no one ever explained to me. If this is for the kids, how does hallway monitoring as classroom instruction help the kids prepare for the global economy?

No one has provided me with that answer. I think I know why that answer has never been provided to me. It's because there isn't an answer. That's not going to help the kids. That's just a way of trying to get around Bill 160, a way of ensuring that a quality education will not be provided to the children at a reasonable cost to the taxpayer. Really, I think that's what we all want: quality education

for our children, but at the same time a reasonable cost for the taxpayer so that we're not swamped with taxes and we can all have a reasonable lifestyle, and as well that we can compete in the global economy with societies that have lower taxes.

What I see from our local board is Bill 160 functioning very smoothly. In fact, you can see direct benefits to the children. I list them as follows: There are extra books in the classroom this year. There are extra resource teachers in the classroom this year. There are extra elementary teachers who have been hired, so there are more elementary teachers in our system than last year. Not a single teacher in the high school system has lost a job. No teacher will lose his or her job due to these changes. There will be fewer kids in the classroom so that there will be more individual attention for each and every child. As well, in sum total, the teachers will have fewer kids to teach this year than last year. So putting all that together, I see tremendous benefits to the children: extra resources, extra books, more class time, fewer class demands on the teachers other than the 24 minutes per day.

If Bill 160 is what that is about and if what we're all about here in the Legislature is providing quality education for a reasonable cost to the taxpayer, we've done that. We now have fair funding for each and every student in the province. I can only imagine that if each board did what Mr Daly did, using the tools of Bill 160 in the Catholic system — that's why there is all this extra turmoil in the Catholic system. There has been an infusion of money into the Catholic system. I think the total figure is \$300 million. So really, there shouldn't be any problems in the Catholic system. They've got extra money; \$300 million is nothing to sniff at, it's a large amount of money. But it is the sector that's showing the most strife. I suspect the reason for that is — as in my board, it's probably province-wide — the teachers' unions don't want that money to go into the classroom for the kids. They want all of it to go to pay for enhanced benefits and salaries to teachers. While I personally wouldn't oppose that — I don't see why a teacher can't make a reasonable salary or even more than the maximum they're making, if they're an excellent teacher — the fact is that we are increasing spending province-wide but we have a duty to the taxpayer, all of us, to use fiscal responsibility and make sure the taxpayer is paying a reasonable amount of taxes. I think we're at that point now where people are taxed out and cannot pay any more taxes.

The bottom line is that this year we're spending more money than ever before in the history of Ontario towards the education system, but the difference between this year and last year is more of it is being specifically directed at the students. If the other boards use the innovative tools of Bill 160, the extra money that's available to them in the Catholic system by Bill 160, I can see a very enhanced benefit to the students and there's no reason why the students in the Catholic system will not only continue to have quality education but will actually have a better education system this year and in ensuing years than they did last year.

In conclusion, I think the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board is a vivid and clear example of how Bill 160 — if properly implemented, if the tools are used, if we could only have the co-operation of the unionized sector, if all the money, the extra resources and the allocation of resources will be directed into the classroom, then what we will have is an enhanced education system and quality education for our students at a reasonable cost to the taxpayer. That's what we're all here for. That's what the design of Bill 160 is for and that's what a government should and would want to achieve with any legislation for education.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the debate this afternoon. I wish I didn't have to, because we're dealing once again with what we refer to as a time allocation motion. That means that once again Mike Harris is choking off debate in this Legislature of an important piece of legislation. There are many members of the Legislature who would like to be able to speak to this bill.

Under the rule changes that Mike Harris forced on this province and on this Legislature in particular, there is much less time available to debate important pieces of legislation, to draw out arguments that should be made publicly and to try, remote as that opportunity is, to persuade the government to change its mind on certain provisions within the bill. Time after time this government uses what is called time allocation or the choking off of debate as a device to limit the kind of public debate that should take place on issues of this kind.

It is one of those issues which members of the news media are not interested in, not necessarily the people who are here at Queen's Park but their editors and their producers, who, when asked if they should cover a story of that kind, when you're changing procedural rules, are quick to say, "No, it isn't an interesting enough topic." Yet the changing of the rules of this House, of the procedures of this House, has had a major effect, a major impact on democracy in this province. What is disconcerting is that new governments taking over, having been handed a tool of this kind, are very reluctant to make the change to a different kind of system.

The debate is again a debate on education this afternoon. I must say, rather than being angry with the government, I am standing this afternoon with a sense of lament that a once strong and vibrant and well-funded education system is under continuous and constant assault by Mike Harris and those who advise him, particularly the non-elected members of the Legislature: those in the Premier's office, the 20-something and early-30-something Fraser Institute types who advise the Premier on what he should do; or Tom Long, who is a Conservative operative in the backrooms, or Jan Dymond or any of these other people whom members of this Legislature may know but the general public doesn't.

What is unfortunate is that the government, under the leadership of Mike Harris, has decided that it should try to divide the people of this province, to turn one sector of the province against another sector of the province.

In education in particular it is important that we have a team approach, that we have boards of education and the elected trustees working together with the teachers and administration so that we can produce for the students of this province and for the parents of those students the kind of education system of which we can all be justifiably proud.

What we have now as a result of Mike Harris using the bulldozer, of Mike Harris moving ahead quickly, radically and drastically without assessing the impact of the policies is disruption and instability within the education system in this province. But that is not limited to the education system alone; it is in the health care system and many other areas where the Premier and his closest non-elected advisers have decided that it's smart politics to set one part of the province against another. It seems to me that what is important is the building of a consensus in this province, of trying to bring people together. If you're trying to implement change within an education system or a health care system, it is important to enlist the support and the expertise and the enthusiasm of those who are on the front line of the delivery of those services, whether they be health care services or educational services.

1550

Instead, the government has chosen to attack members of the teaching profession and has used — we cannot use in this House words such as “misleading” or “lying” or things of that kind. We can't use them for a very good reason. That is because there should be an assumption in the House that all members are honourable and that all members are going to tell the truth. So we find creative ways of trying to say that what the government states or what the opposition states is not necessarily accurate. That's the way I would place it this afternoon, to say that the information, in my opinion, that is put forward by the government on many education issues is not complete and is not always accurate. That's most unfortunate.

The government is engaging now in an orgy of advertising the likes of which I have never seen in Ontario before. I have watched three different governments in power: I have seen the Davis Conservative administration, which had some advertising that people might complain about, I've seen the Peterson Liberal administration and the Rae NDP administration. All those governments have certainly provided information to people in the province. What is substantially different this time is the kind of advertising, if not the volume.

Yes, every time you reach into the mailbox now you pull out yet another pamphlet. You must have pulled this one out the other day, which is strictly government propaganda. It is one supposedly on education, put out by this government at a heavy cost to the taxpayers. I guess you have to pull it open like this. It's got all kinds of good things to say about what the government is doing in education.

If the Conservative Party were paying for this — and heaven knows, with all those fundraisers they're holding, they have the corporate crowd, the most powerful and the richest people in this province, who are saying thank you

to Mike Harris and his crowd for providing them with the kinds of policies they want, such as deregulating. You see, you don't have the kinds of environmental regulations or legislation you used to have. Or putting the fox in charge of the henhouse: In so many cases where you had a government agency, such as the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, impartial, publicly funded, supervising several areas of business activity, you've now put that group in charge of themselves.

The tax cut that was brought about, which was a 30% income tax cut in this province, benefited the most wealthy people in the province the most in terms of dollars they got in their pockets. Those people have said thank you to the Conservative Party. They show up at the fundraisers, and the Conservatives managed to rope a few other people into it by just suggesting that if they show up at a fundraiser maybe their hospital or their school will be treated better, or something of that nature. There's that implication — or a thank you for a grant.

I'm not going to get into that issue, but I simply want to point out that the Conservative Party has money overflowing its coffers. The members should be happy with that. My good friend the member — I was going to say for Etobicoke Centre but I would be premature if I were to say that; I have to say Etobicoke-Humber — would agree with me, I'm sure, that the Conservative Party has millions upon millions upon millions of dollars in its war chest. When I think of that, I wonder why the taxpayers of this province have to pay for this government's propaganda, pamphlets that keep showing up at the doorsteps of people, in the mailboxes. Here's something from David Lindsay, who was, you'll recall, the principal secretary to the Premier, who was the communications guru in the Conservative caucus. He puts this out.

If this were the Conservative Party putting this out, I would say fair game; I'm unhappy that they have all kinds of money to do that, but that would be fair. It's not fair, it's an abuse of public trust, an abuse of public office when the government of Ontario puts this out. If you turn on the radio, you hear more ads from the government of Ontario, paid for by the government of Ontario. If you turn on the television set, you see even more ads out there which are involved with the government putting out a propaganda message.

It's the nature of the message which is most important. They are spending a lot of money, yes, millions upon millions of dollars of taxpayers' money out there, to do this self-congratulatory, self-serving, blatant, partisan political advertising. I am surprised that I haven't heard from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation on this, or the Ontario Taxpayers Federation, or — what is the one Colin Brown used to head up?

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): The NCC.

Mr Bradley: Yes, the National Citizens' Coalition. Those people are all very good at being very watchful about government expenditures. I've been waiting to hear from them about those new highway signs that say: “Your Ontario tax dollars at work. Mike Harris, Premier.” They

cost all kinds of money. I'm sure tomorrow or the next day — I remember my friend Frank Sheehan, who is in the House today, used to be with the taxpayers coalition. I'm surprised that some of his friends in the taxpayers coalition, who were very vigilant about government expenditures when the NDP was in power, haven't been chastising Mike Harris for squandering millions upon millions of dollars on self-serving, congratulatory advertising. In fact, I suspect my good friend Frank will bring forward a private member's bill that will prevent his own government from wasting all this money on self-serving, congratulatory messages, full-page ads of this kind.

The newspaper editorialists: I've been looking for them, because they're good at watching government expenditures. When the NDP was in power, I remember seeing editorial after editorial chastising the NDP, whenever these editorialists thought that somehow there was going to be an expenditure that couldn't be justified. Now, I know that Conrad Black, the friend of the Conservative Party, the friend of the right wing, owns and controls these newspapers. He perhaps doesn't want his newspapers to criticize those who are prepared to spend, to squander all kinds of money on an orgy of advertising at the taxpayers' expense.

Those gruff talk show hosts I hear in Toronto, or my friend Lowell Green in Ottawa: These are gruff people and they're usually watching carefully for governments squandering money. The silence has been deafening. This government is going to continue to spend, to squander, to throw money into self-serving, congratulatory advertising as long as they can get away with it.

I'm confident that the Ontario Taxpayers Federation and the National Citizens' Coalition are going to be issuing a press release on this to denounce it, and that the editorialists are going to be joining in this, and the talk show hosts are going to be joining in the condemnation of this kind of political advertising. We're not talking about an ad which calls for tenders — quite legitimate. We're not talking about an ad that says to the people, "You should get your influenza shot, and here's how you can get it," to prevent influenza. That's quite legitimate.

Ms Lankin: Or "You should get your health card and here is how you do it."

Mr Bradley: I won't go that far. The member says, "You should get your health card." They were just a bit in line with what I would call political advertising. But that's the past tense. I don't worry about the past tense now, just as I don't worry about the fact that many of the things the Conservative government is doing in education today were started by Dave Cooke. I don't worry about that, that it was the NDP Minister of Education.

I think the member for Beaches-Woodbine would agree with me that you'll find a consensus on many of these matters. The Minister of Education likes to get up and trot out that there should be some kind of standardized testing taking place. I'm sorry, I don't remember a debate in this House — there can be over the kind of testing and the specifics, but I know all three parties are in favour of that. Everybody wants a high-quality education system. Every-

body knows that the new curriculum initiatives started under the NDP, not under the Conservatives. They were already doing that. So on many of these things that the minister talks about, there's a consensus. Where there's not a consensus is on the withdrawal of close to \$1 billion from the education system by the minister.

In other words, we're seeing an increase in the number of students in the system. This government is not making the same kind of expenditures per pupil, per student, that was the case in the past.

1600

Members may remember that in the middle of the negotiations between the teachers' federations and the government, in the hallway in the Whitney Block, they questioned Dave Johnson — I'll use his name so people know; he's our Minister of Education — about how many teaching positions he thought would disappear as a result of Bill 160. He was relatively new to the system then. In those days, he didn't know that ministers sometimes should be like Pinocchio. He said, "I would estimate 7,500 net teaching positions would disappear in this province." That was the minister's own estimate of positions that would no longer be there. Even with retirement and new people coming in, "7,500," said the Minister of Education himself.

Ms Lankin: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't mean to interrupt the member, but I've been provoked by the number of government members leaving. Could you check and see if there's a quorum, please?

The Acting Speaker: Would you check if we have a quorum.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: As I was saying, what it appears to be all about is the government wanting to defund education.

If they were honest about it up front, I wouldn't agree with them even then. But I think people would have respected them more if they were up front and said, "Look, the real reason we're doing this is that we want to cut 7,500 teaching positions out," because their bluff was called. Remember the negotiations that were taking place between the government and the members of the teachers' federation, who at that point were fighting Bill 160, which they and many public figures said would be detrimental to the province? Bill 160 has nothing to do with all this quality stuff or things of that nature; what it has to do with is taking money out of the education system.

If the government had been honest and up front, its Reform Party supporters would have said, "Yes, we agree with you that we should fire out of the door 7,500 teachers net." If you were honest and up front about it, I think people could have accepted it. But what you've tried to do is pretend somehow you're bringing, net, more teachers into the system; that at the end of this exercise, because we have more students in the province per capita, we will

have more people to work with those students. That has been the inaccuracy in the information the government has provided.

The government has very clever people working in its advertising departments. They hire the best Conservatives they can find to do their advertising, and they're happy to get that cash in, those whose advertising agency is making the money. But you don't enlist the support of people, you don't bring people together, by attacking them or by providing information which is not accurate to the public. When I see some of those television ads or hear those radio ads or look at the full-page ads, I know the contents of those ads are not accurate. If they were accurate, honest and up front, I wouldn't be in the House today complaining about them.

There was a fight going on during Bill 160, not between the Harris Conservatives and the teachers' federations; it was a fight between those who believe in a strong, high-quality, publicly funded, vibrant education system and those who do not. Because, you see, those who cater to the very rich in society, to the most powerful in society, know that those people have other options. They have the expensive private schools they can send their children to. If one were to be suspicious, one could make the conclusion that by doing damage to the publicly funded education system the government is now moving towards, first of all, charter schools and then more and more private schools, so that the children of the very wealthy, of the most powerful people, as is the case so much in the United States, will go to those systems and leave the public system to those who don't have those financial and powerful advantages.

That would be most unfortunate, because the role of the publicly funded education system is to provide equality of opportunity. We cannot determine ultimately the outcomes of people. We cannot assume that everyone will be successful in business, the professions, in industry, in any particular line of work. We can't ensure that is the case. But our role and responsibility as legislators is to ensure that we have a high-quality, vibrant, strong, publicly funded education system so that we have that equality of opportunity, so that the son or the daughter of people of very modest means has the same opportunity as those of the richest and most powerful people in the province, so we can truly say we have equality of opportunity, not equality of opportunity only for those who are the richest people in the province. That's what is most unfortunate, that many people in the government actually believe there should be one set of rules for the rich and the powerful and one set of rules for the rest of the people.

We also see that in post-secondary education, where we're going back to the 1940s or 1950s, where in fact only the children, as they grow up and become teenagers and into their 20s, of the wealthiest people in the province or only those children who have the most capability academically will be those who can advance into higher education. That is what is happening. If you are wealthy in this province, if the children come from a wealthy family, an advantaged family, they will be able to go to university,

because that can be funded. If they come from modest incomes, that's much more difficult.

There are two sets of people we will see in education as we make it more costly for the students; one is the children of the very wealthy and the other group, quite legitimately, would be those who are extremely clever, extremely intelligent and able to get all the scholarships and so on. But the many people out there who have perhaps less talent than others, but still a lot of talent, and don't have the money are going to be left out of the equation, and that's disconcerting, because parents I talk to in my constituency are worried that their children will not be able to go to the community colleges and to the universities across this province.

They recognize as well that Mike Harris has removed rent control. A lot of people don't know that, because the government did it in a very sneaky way. They said, "We're not removing rent control, but if you move out of a place, then that apartment, that rental dwelling, is no longer controlled under rent control." Students move quite often, so they're going to be finding the cost of housing, of accommodation, much higher, along with the cost of tuition.

Some of the university presidents, not all, have applauded the government for deregulating tuition and for allowing the universities to charge much more for programs, for instance, for doctors or lawyers or commerce, a bachelor of commerce or master of commerce and so on, the post-grad master's programs around the province, graduate programs. They are allowing the university to charge much more for that. What does that mean? Again it means that the children of the wealthiest shall have that wealth perpetuated by means of a system which is skewed in favour of the wealthy and the powerful in the province.

I want all students, regardless of what background they come from — and certainly the young people from wealthy families are as entitled as anybody else; I like to see them in university and community colleges. But I also want to see the others there as well. I don't want to simply see two classes of people, where the wealth keeps increasing for one class, where more and more one group of people has more and more of the money while the people at the bottom have less and less. That's the kind of polarization we've seen happening in the United States. I don't want to see that duplicated here, yet I know that many of the policies of this government militate in favour of that.

1610

I've heard the minister and one of the Conservative members who spoke earlier speak about the fact that there are supposed to be 22 students in the classroom in secondary education. Well, I talked to Russ McBride, of Lakeport high school, who phoned me to say that in the next semester he would have 41 students in his advanced history class — 41 students would be in his class. The government tries to get the message out to give the impression that somehow no class will be above 22. The minister uses the term that they're "capped" at 22. Once in a while he'll allow the word "average" to slip in, but for the most part

he likes to give the impression that the most you're going to see is 22. That simply isn't the case.

I'm going to go back to when there was a discussion taking place over potential amendments to Bill 160. I remember the Minister of Education saying, "I want more contact time between teachers in secondary schools and the students." The teachers' federation people who were having discussions with him said: "We think we can accomplish that. Why don't you lengthen the school day and our teachers will teach longer periods? Why don't you do that? That seems sensible. You can eliminate some of the professional development days and we can probably shorten the time allocated for the examination days. We'll have more contact with students." Of course what they were doing was calling the bluff of Mike Harris, and when the government said, "We don't want that," it was quite clear then that what they wanted was to fire out the door — by the minister's own admission, not mine — some 7,500 teachers or teaching positions. That's what it was all about, and I think you have to be honest and up front if that's what you're going to do.

I deplore the attack by members of this government on elected trustees. While any one of us may quibble with or quarrel with something an individual trustee has said or done somewhere in the province, by and large these were people who had an interest in education and were prepared to work hard to see that the education system in their area worked. What Mike Harris has decided is that he wants all the power here in Toronto in the office of the Minister of Education or, probably more accurately, in the Premier's office as to what kind of decisions will be made in education, with no flexibility to the local people.

That is totally contrary to what the Conservative Party over the years has stood for. The Conservative Party always believed in local autonomy in years gone by. The Reform Party doesn't, but the Conservative Party believes in local autonomy.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Some of my friends who are now contesting the nomination in St Catharines-Brock, unlike my good friend Tom Froese, who, though I may disagree with him from time to time, I would consider to be one of the more moderate Conservatives — perhaps that says something, Tom, about the Conservative Party these days, but I would consider Tom to be one of the more moderate Conservatives. Those within his own association, some of those who have been less than helpful, are people who are significantly to the right of Tom and what I consider to be the mainstream Conservative Party in this province over the years.

I look at that and say this is lamentable, because you're taking all the power away from the local area and centralizing it here in Toronto under whatever government happens to be in power. I think there is a role for trustees elected by the people in the area to play in some of the educational policy which will be implemented within a local area.

What you've done now is that you've got people fighting with one another. It's almost as though Mike Harris

sits above the fray rubbing his hands, along with Guy Giorno and the other advisers, and says to the people, "Isn't this nice to see?" We have now the teachers fighting with the boards of education. We have some boards fighting with other boards. We have non-teaching staff fighting with teaching staff. Everybody is pointing the finger somewhere else. We all remember as children the game called pin the tail on the donkey, but if you want to pin the tail on the donkey, you have to find the donkey, and I know where the donkey is.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I see him.

Mr Bradley: You're right. You have a picture of the donkey in front of you right now, I say to my good friend from Perth county. Look right there; the blame lies at Queen's Park, in the Office of the Premier.

When they start fighting with one another, when I see them writing letters to the editor, one attacking the other, I say the problem lies in Toronto, with the Conservative government in Toronto, not with your local board of education. I feel very sad when I see the people in an area fighting with one another —

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): What about in Nickel Belt? What did they think about it?

Mr Bradley: — people who used to work together in Lambton county. My friend Marcel will remember when you had the local people working together for education. You didn't have one side trying to hammer the other side. You didn't have one side criticizing the other side. You had people working together for the best in education, and that's what I want to see it return to.

I want to enlist the support of all the people in education. People have cast aside the maintenance staff and the cleaning staff and the secretarial staff and so on, as though that's not important in our education system. Indeed it is. Or the secretarial staff; they'll say, "You've got to cut the secretarial staff because they're not in the classroom," yet they provide important services in the field of education. It's always been a team effort there. The secretaries, the custodians of the school, the maintenance staff who come in, the cleaning people who are there, the teaching assistants, the people who operate the technical equipment, all of these people are part of a team; and many of them after years of service have been fired out the door because of the funding formula this government has applied to the field of education.

That's unfortunate because we all benefit from a strong education system, every one of us. We all have that goal. I'm sure the three parties have that goal. They may have different ways of achieving it, but surely everyone in this province — teacher, student, parent, business person, labour person, everybody — wants to see a strong education system.

If there is one theme that would condemn what the Conservative government has done, it's the dividing of people in this province, the setting of one section against another. I know it plays well sometimes to bash people in the public service. I know that plays well with a certain crowd. I think it's important to avoid that easy opportunity to hit somebody over the head with a sledgehammer to the

applause of others. It's easy to do, but the right thing to do is to try to bring people together and to try to get people to understand one another. The advertising campaign that's going on now will do anything but that, the policies will do anything but that, and the answers of the Minister of Education will not do that.

When I was Minister of the Environment and I used to deal with Dave Johnson — I'll use his name — the member for Don Mills, the Minister of Education, I found him to be a good person to deal with when he was mayor of the city. He was very fair, he was a very truthful person and I liked dealing with him. Today he's been given a new role; he's been given the role of giving the government line. I can't say it's misleading, nor should I be able to say it in the House, because of the rules of the House. I can't say that, but I'll tell you the information that he has been given by Guy Giorno and others to give to the people of this province is not what I would consider to be accurate information. That's the limit of what I can say in this House. I don't consider it to be accurate information, and that's most unfortunate.

What we need is an opportunity to bring people together, to build that consensus. You see, when you attacked teachers before, you forgot that they were the sons and daughters of people, you forgot that they were the brothers and sisters of people, the cousins, the next-door neighbours, the best friends of people. They were able to provide an answer to some of the propaganda that the government was putting out in the field of education. It's most unfortunate when that happens.

1620

What I want to see happen is a return to stability in the province. We've got significant instability and disruption now. I think you can do that if you ask people to work together, if you show them respect, if you don't attack them, if you're honest with them, if you ask them, the people in the front line of providing educational services, whether they be the people in the classroom, the administrators, the caretakers, the secretaries, the non-teaching assistants, if you ask all of those people how we can build a strong education system, how we can do it together, whether they happen to have a Conservative background, a Liberal background, a New Democratic Party background, or perhaps no particular affiliation.

That's what we need in this province, and that's what we're not seeing from this government. I lament that very much. There are days when I become angry when I hear the answers of the Minister of Education or when I read or see the advertisements, but I recognize that it is a government that is bent upon dividing people in the province instead of bringing them together.

When I see people out on the picket line — and knowing some of these people, they are very moderate people — the last place they want to be is on a picket line. The last thing they want to be doing is engaging in a work-to-rule campaign, because they are people who got into the business, got into the profession of education, because they wanted to work with students. They wanted to do the very best for students. They wanted to help our society.

To see you people dump on them the way the Premier did at the Ontario Chamber of Commerce meeting in Toronto, where he thought he had a crowd which would give him a standing ovation when he declared, unlike when he's overseas and says we have the best-educated group, that the education system is lousy and the students coming out were bad — I thought most unfortunate. When he made that particular point, he didn't get the standing ovation that he thought he was going to get.

Ultimately the public understands. Ultimately people of goodwill understand that you've got to bring people together, that you've got to build together a strong, vibrant, well-funded and, let's say, a consensus-building education system in which all can feel at home, an education system which will bring about the kind of equality of opportunity that we want to provide for people in this province. That's a challenge all of us have. That's a challenge all of us should try to meet. Certainly, as an elected member, that will be my role and responsibility, to bring people together, to work together to build what all of us in this province seek: the best education system possible.

This legislation will certainly not guarantee that. In fact, it will militate against that happening.

Ms Lankin: I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate this afternoon. I'm going to speak briefly, because many of my colleagues also want to speak to this.

I had an opportunity last week to put some comments on the record with respect to the piece of legislation itself, Bill 63, and my concerns about the content of the legislation. Today what I would like to talk about are the concerns we have about what's happening in the education system and how this bill fails to meet any of those concerns.

I particularly am appreciative of the opportunity to speak today because of an event that I was at on the weekend. It was the 75th anniversary reunion of Bowmore Road Public School, which is in the riding of Beaches-Woodbine. It was a joyous occasion, as reunions are, many people seeing each other who hadn't seen each other for a long time. There were many smiles and hugs and gleeful cheers of: "Hello. How are you?" It sort of warmed the heart.

During the official proceedings, one of the past principals of the school rose to speak. He read from this document — I got a copy from him — entitled "On the Occasion of my 75th Birthday," by Bowmore Road Public School. This is a school speaking, and you'll see that the school on a couple of occasions refers to "that guy making the noise." That was the past principal, who was reading it and who shares the same age. He's 75 years old as well. I just wanted to put this dissertation on the record and make a couple of comments about it, because it speaks to the heart and soul of what our education is about, what we expect of our schools and the changes that are taking place.

"On the occasion of my 75th birthday.

"By Bowmore Road.

"Thank you for coming to my birthday party. Not every school can boast of such a celebration after 75 years, or

see once more some of its youthful blood flow through it again — if only for one day. You know, if it were not for you, I wouldn't exist at all.

"And that fellow making noises now, why, he was born in the same year as I, 1923, but when he came here to work my bones, I was already 36 years old! Of course, I have had a few pieces added to my body since then; a few repairs here and there. But so has he — and there's a good chance that I shall last longer than he will.

"Of course, I have a big problem right now. It has nothing to do with my water works or my circulation, my joints or even the humans that ebb and flow through me each day. No, it has more to do with my purpose in life. When you built me 75 years ago, you called me a school, and everyone said they knew what that was. A place where you send young empty-headed idiots to be filled up with the facts. Of course, during the night I was just a pile of bricks and mortar, like all the other schools across the land. But during the day I became a garden of love and learning where my share of young Canadians spent most of their waking hours. I became rather proud of the fact that I was the only place in the community where people entered in the morning and left better at the end of the day. Like magicians, my teachers often performed the impossible, and did such things as only God could understand.

"Bricks and mortar. Wires and pipes. Furniture and computers. Books and gadgets. Tools for learning. But they are all inert, dead, with no soul and no purpose. They lie there in my body, waiting. Then they come alive in the presence of my people and something happens which I can't explain. I become more grand than a hospital, almost a holy place. But no one notices as they pass by out there. No one sees the heat and light that are generated here. Why even those who ignite the flame are often unaware of what they've done. And young Paula, whose eyes are glowing, may be unaware of the fact that she's on fire. But she will still be burning 50 years later — and Miss Smith will still be kindling flame. In a place of magic, really. A learning circus, built to tickle the fancy and train the mind to do great things.

"My problem is that I now feel less like a garden and more like a football field where politicians play their games. My gardeners and their seedlings are twisted and turned and kicked to satisfy some new demand or to forsake some practice that appeared old-fashioned. I have become so unstable that my teachers fear for their sanity, and even I, solid as I am, now sit in the night and shudder to think what tomorrow will bring. Will I be a racetrack, a skills factory, a branch plant of international standards, an arena for arguments? I roll over but I can't sleep. What a shame that my people seem to have lost their vision, and seem so eager to prove that they are better than others, that they would forsake the nobility of learning in favour of uniform training for utilitarian purpose. I remember that 'dump' that lay just to the west of the schoolyard. It was not a classroom — but more real learning took place in the experience of cleaning it up than in some of the lessons taught inside. Its chief gardener was Mr Harvey — and he knew what he was doing. Why, Miss Tock's class took an

airplane and added to their knowledge by flying over Parry Sound, for heaven's sake! And almost 40 years ago two young seedlings appeared on television, helping to teach a lesson on Eskimo life. My people are doing great things every day. But does anybody care?

"It's all so simple, really. Here I am, 75 years old, and my real purpose remains the same. I am a garden, after all. The children who grow here are in great variety and require tender care, nourishment, individual attention and fertile soils of knowledge, understanding and creative thought. Their gardeners must have as their basic tools love and confidence, and the certain knowledge that theirs is a profound service celebrated by the owners of the farm. It was always so. Tests, standardization, competition, they come and go with the political climate. But real learning is above all that. May God inspire you to watch out for the perennial needs of my gardeners and their young seedlings. Storm without stability leads to ruin. I read that in the Farmer's Almanac. I think that it's called Common Sense.

1630

"I'm going to ring one of my bells now, and signal my old friend Dennis to stop. Again, thanks for coming, and please take special care of me, in these troubling times."

I mentioned that this was written by a past principal of Bowmore school. That principal was there in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but he went on to do some other remarkable things. I say other remarkable things because he left a remarkable legacy at that school, and I'll talk about that in just a moment. But he went on to do some other remarkable things in boards of education like Leeds-Grenville, and in the old Ontario Department of Education, where he was the secretary.

His name is Lloyd Dennis, and Lloyd Dennis went on, along with Justice Hall, to co-author a report that looked at the aims and objectives of education in the schools of Ontario, more commonly known as Living and Learning, and even more commonly known as the Hall-Dennis report: a chart for the future of education, a chart that was created in the times of a previous Tory government, a vision that was set out and, as you can hear from his remarks as he speaks on behalf of Bowmore Road Public School, a vision that he believes has been lost by those decision-makers of today, a loss that he laments. I think many of us share those views. I was honoured to meet him, to be in the presence of such a great visionary of our education system.

One of the heartening things I felt I was able to say to him is that the kind of vision and excellence that he brought to Bowmore is still alive in that school despite the chaos in the system, despite the instability, despite the storm that may lead to the ruin that he referred to.

About a week and a half or two weeks ago on CBC, I watched the in-depth coverage of the Mandela-and-the-children event at SkyDome. CBC followed a class of grade 5 and grade 6 students who prepared for the visit, and went to the SkyDome and talked to them afterwards. These were grades 5 and 6 students from Bowmore Road Public School in my riding, and they were the brightest,

most articulate, compassionate, caring citizens I have seen brought together to talk about the issues and the social injustice of racism in a long time. These were grade 5 and 6 students.

I was able to say to Lloyd Dennis that obviously excellence is still alive in Bowmore Road Public School and, I believe, in many schools across this province. I was able to say to him, "When you look at those kids, you've got to say, 'Someone's doing something right.'" It's about time more of the leaders of this province stood up and said that instead of denigrating the profession of education, instead of denigrating the products of our school system, our wonderful children, instead of creating the chaos out of which your fiscal reforms may emerge, but we must ask whether or not the ongoing quality of our education system will remain intact.

I hope, for the sake of the kids in Bowmore and in other schools, that it will. I hope, to pay tribute to the work of people like Lloyd Dennis and many other visionaries in the system, that it will. But I think it takes political courage and political leadership of a different sort than we're seeing with respect to education in Ontario today.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): It's my privilege to rise and participate in the debate on the motion on Bill 63, the instruction time act. I'd like to begin my remarks today by saying that in Ontario we have some of the very best teachers in Canada. They work hard and they are very valuable to our province. I know that because I'm a product of the school system here in Ontario and I'm getting a second chance to revisit the school system as a parent and to see the fine job that teachers do in our schools today. The fact is that teachers in Ontario care about the students they teach and want them to excel. I strongly believe that, and I've always believed that.

Last year we set some very high standards for our education system when we debated the issue of instruction time. We discussed the meaning of "classroom instruction," but we did not at that time include a specific definition of the word "instruction" because it is a commonly understood term that it is time spent in the classroom teaching children.

In all of this, the union's role is to fight on behalf of teachers, and that is their constituency. It is natural, then, that we have a difference of opinion on the meaning of instruction time. I honestly believe that if the NDP were in power today or the Liberal Party were in power today, there would still be a difference of opinion with the teacher unions on the definition of instruction time.

There are many things that teachers do that are valuable within the school setting. One of them, for example, is cafeteria duty. It's very important, but it is not instructional time. Hall monitoring is also important, but that too is not instructional time. Instructional time is time spent in the classroom teaching our children.

Some will attempt to argue that this bill will make our schools unsafe and that without hall monitors our schools will not be safe. That's simply not accurate. As I'm sure you're aware, I've spent the last year consulting with

parents, teachers, students, administrators and the police on questions of school safety and a safe schools policy. It was pointed out to me that in order to have a safe school, everyone, including the teachers, administrative personnel and students, must be committed to having a safe school, and that to maintain a safe school is a constant challenge in today's environment and we must always be vigilant. It is for that reason I introduced the Safe Schools Act. Safety is everyone's responsibility at all times.

The amendment that's being proposed in Bill 63 here today will clarify the issue of just what instructional time is. It will ensure a consistent, province-wide understanding and application as we move ahead to enhance the quality of education for our students in this province. The goal of all of our initiatives is to enhance the quality of education for our students in the classroom by setting high province-wide standards.

As parents and legislators we all have a personal stake in ensuring that the education our children receive in Ontario is the best it can possibly be. For that reason I have supported the reforms that the government has taken with respect to education. My constituents have demanded higher standards for education in this province. In fact, parents across this province have demanded higher standards, and I think that members opposite are aware of this fact, that the government has worked with parents to improve the standards in Ontario.

The agenda of this government is to put students first by focusing on the quality in the classroom. Some of our higher standards include a new, rigorous curriculum that Ontario elementary school students will receive, that they will receive increased instruction in history and geography. There's been a growing concern over the years that Ontario students were not learning enough history and geography in school, and this new, rigorous curriculum addresses this concern by spelling out clearly what students should learn in each grade. Students will learn about Canada, they'll learn about its history, its geography, civics and economics. They will also broaden their knowledge of world history, geography and economics by studying such countries as the United Kingdom, Japan and the United States.

The new social studies, history and geography curriculum for students in grades 1 to 8 completes the Ontario curriculum for elementary students that has been introduced over the last 12 months to boost students' achievement. Like the previously released curriculum documents, the new social studies, history and geography curriculum provides teachers, students and parents with clear expectations of the knowledge and skills that Ontario elementary students are expected to attain in each grade. These expectations are consistent across the province, so whether it's in Riverdale, Scarborough Centre, Espanola or anywhere else in Ontario, the language, science, technology and mathematics curriculum will be consistent across the province.

New textbooks and classroom learning materials are one of the best investments we can make in our children's learning.

The first phase of Ontario's \$100-million investment in up-to-date textbooks has funded the purchase of 3.2 million textbooks, that's an average of 2.5 textbooks for every elementary student in this province, starting off the new school year with the benefit of textbooks that support the new, challenging provincial curriculums in mathematics, language, science and technology.

1640

Two weeks ago I was invited by the principal of a school in my riding on a job shadowing day to find out a little bit more about what she did in her job as principal in a school in Toronto. I was pleased that Principal Diane Gillies of Robert Service Senior Public School invited me to spend the day with her to see first-hand what principals do and to go into the classrooms and see the activities that are happening there with the school.

What was most interesting was talking to teachers about new textbooks. One teacher in particular pointed out to me that on the day the new textbooks had arrived, it was the first time in at least 12 if not 15 years that he had new textbooks to work with in his class. It was very gratifying to hear that a government of this province is finally putting money into textbooks on behalf of the students.

We have also instituted a system of province-wide tests to ensure that our students, whether they live in Espanola or Riverdale or Scarborough or Windsor or Ottawa, are all receiving the education that is necessary to prepare them for the next millennium.

We have also ensured that students get the first-hand assistance they require by legislating board average class sizes of 25 and 22 students for elementary and secondary schools respectively. We have also ensured that teachers spend more time with students in the classroom.

We have protected funding for special education, and that was a concern of many of my constituents, and we have protected funding for early learning and junior kindergarten.

My constituents have told me that they want our classroom dollars to be focused on the students in the classroom. Year after year more money has been put into our education system. Parents and taxpayers want to know that they are getting the most value for their education dollar, yet it seems the leadership of the unions — and I didn't say "teachers"; I said the "leadership of the unions," the leaders of the teacher unions in Ontario — have exploited the differences in opinion with regard to the changes we are making to the education system.

We all have the same goal. We all want the education system in Ontario to be the best in Canada, indeed the best education in all the world. I suppose where we differ is how do we achieve that goal.

According to the Education Improvement Commission, high school teachers in Ontario spend an average of 3.75 hours of their total working day teaching students in the classroom. Compare this to the national average of 4.5 hours per day. As a result, secondary school teachers in Ontario spend less time in the classroom than teachers in the other provinces. Teachers in these other provinces still

teach band, direct the school play, coach football or water polo and they still participate in extracurricular activities. They simply spend more of their day instructing students within the classroom.

As we have continually said, teachers being required to spend four hours and 10 minutes per day, an increase of 25 minutes, is still below the national average. In fact, even with the extra minutes the secondary teachers in Ontario will spend teaching students, this will actually be less than the total in seven other provinces.

We all realize that teachers work a full day. We know that they have other responsibilities within the school and we recognize that teachers need time to mark and to prepare for classes. We realize that so many teachers work late nights and weekends preparing for that. Teachers are dedicated to their students and this should not and will not ever change. Those who have gone the extra mile in the past will continue to do so in the future.

The debate today is not about telling teachers to work harder. It is not about questioning the commitment teachers have made to our children. The debate today is simply about clarifying what constitutes teaching time. We are setting the definition in writing to confirm what we already know, and that is that instruction time means time spent in the classroom teaching students.

This bill —

Mr Marchese: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I think there's no quorum in the House. Would you check, please?

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Clerk, if you could check and see if there is a quorum, please.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough Centre.

Mr Newman: As I was just mentioning, according to the Education Improvement Commission, high school teachers in Ontario spend an average of 3.75 hours of their total working day teaching students in the classroom. Compare this to the national average of 4.5 hours per day. As a result, secondary school teachers in Ontario spend less time in the classroom than teachers in other provinces. Teachers in these other provinces still teach band, direct the school play, coach football or water polo; they still participate in extracurricular activities. They simply spend more of their day instructing students in the classroom.

As we have continually said, teachers being required to spend four hours and 10 minutes per day, an increase of 25 minutes, is still below the national average. In fact, with the extra minutes the secondary teachers of Ontario will spend teaching students, it's still less than the average of seven other provinces in our country.

We all realize that teachers do indeed work full days and we know they have other responsibilities within the school. We recognize that teachers need time to mark and prepare for classes. We realize and I acknowledge that many teachers do work quite late at night and spend time on weekend doing those functions. Teachers are dedicated

to their students, and I don't believe this should or will ever change. Those who have gone the extra mile in the past will continue to do so in the future.

The debate today is not about telling teachers to work harder. It is not about questioning the commitment that teachers have made to our children. The debate today is simply about clarifying what constitutes teaching time.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Just teach more students.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Algoma, come to order. Member for Perth, come to order.

Mr Newman: We are setting the definition in writing to confirm what we already know: instruction time means time spent in the classroom teaching students. I'll repeat again for the members of the opposition, all three of them who are present here today, that instruction time means time spent in the classroom teaching students.

This bill only confirms the intent of the Education Quality Improvement Act, giving teachers more time to do what they do best, and that is teach.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to address this bill. It's nice to have the chance at all. This is a time allocation motion we're debating, reflecting once again on this government's reluctance. They had to be forced at fingertip, in the midst of debate in question period, to have this discussion at all. There's a consistent theme with health care and education, and it's a government and a lot of members who don't want to be accountable for what their government is actually doing. So when the rubber really hits the road and we have the specifics in front of us, the very clear measures the government wants to take to change the lives of students and teachers, there's a reluctance that is almost extreme on the part of this government to actually lay out there on the table and in debate some reasonable discussion of what they're doing.

Make no mistake, this really is about the Conservative government trying to justify its Comic Book Revolution. It was a comic book that brought them into power and now they're trying to see if somehow, after the fact, they can make all those things work. Well, the smug faces we've seen in the House over the last number of days — they ought to be taking pictures and keeping them at hand, because the story of education in this province is going to be this government's public relations propaganda unraveling in the face of what has actually happened in the classroom, what they actually can't avoid taking responsibility for, what they can't get around being the result of their decisions. When they tell you, as they tried to tell us in the House earlier today and as some of the members repeated in their speeches today, that somehow no teacher being fired is the same thing as having the same number of teachers, that's not true. This government has fired more teachers than it has hired; there are fewer teachers in the classroom. The government's own figures show that. There's a backgrounder the government has put out, probably in error, because it happens to contain some of the truth. It says 6,000 new teachers are being hired and 9,500

have retired, leaving a gap of 3,500 fewer teachers, even though there are 5,000 more students in the classroom.

1650

Even the people opposite have to reckon with that. They have to reckon with what happens as a result of their policies. They've taken money out of the system. Much of the money that's there this year, available to schools, is just for the purpose of transition, getting teachers the heck out of the way. The same kind of thing, for people who care to look at some of the operating details, where this government's true nature is revealed: This year, this government is probably the only government in the western world that will face \$260 million to retire nurses, to fire them, to get rid of them, to never see that money stand in benefit of patients across the province, at the very same time that each of these members opposite is grumbling they have emergency rooms that are backed up with people for two and a half to three to four, as many as seven days. In fact, the member for Etobicoke may wish to know that a 92-year-old woman spent seven days in the Queensway hospital. That's the direct result of a government that won't take responsibility for its actions.

We see that's the kind of image they want to portray, that somehow the new retirement package is something we should be dancing about. That retirement package was paid for by teachers, paid for out of their contributions. Instead this government should acknowledge that it's a sad testament to their policies that so many good teachers have chosen to get out of the profession this year that the new retirement policy was oversubscribed. This government is directly responsible for the active discouragement and putting down and demeaning and non-support of teachers, and it has to take responsibility for that result. That is precisely what they've been able to take advantage of for some of their propaganda, but the results are still clear and crisp, and unfortunately painful for the students who are going to be dealing with the outcomes in the next number of months. They will see that there are 3,500 fewer teachers providing real instruction.

We come back to the kinds of fairy tales this government wants to spin around its comic book. How does it try to make the comic book, 21 pages with pictures, actually work? They're saying: "We could take a billion dollars out of education. We haven't actually studied the matter, we don't actually have any proof for our proposition, but we'll take a billion dollars out of education and at the same time we'll deliver some better-quality education."

I agree that's not necessarily out of the realm of possibility, as the grumbling of one of the members would seem to suggest, but somehow this government would have us take it on face value that they've found some magic here, that with fewer teachers they've found some way to improve the quality of what they're going to do for students. Let's look, because the bill we have today allows us to see exactly what this government's talking about.

Does it mean it's going to give our teachers the backup and support, and the confidence to our parents that the teachers will be there on a more frequent basis for each of the students? Is that what it means? Does that mean this

government is going to hunker down and find ways to do that? Sadly, it doesn't. It means the opposite. It means this government is going to distribute the time and energy and attention and caring of our teachers across more students. That's what it has in mind. It's going to shove more students in per teacher and it's going to take away some of the time the teachers have for each of those students to deal with the overall quality of what they do. That's what this government has in mind. So what it means is —

Interjection.

Mr Kennedy: One of the members opposite mentioned something about classroom size. The government was too afraid to actually be accountable there. They talk about average classroom sizes. Every school in this province has people far above those average classroom sizes. Why? Because it was more propaganda on the part of this government. We have classrooms of 31 and 29 because this government didn't mean it.

In some parts of this province there are people who found the noise the government has made to be comforting, who find the simplistic answers something they can hold on to. They say things like, "There's a government tough enough, courageous enough to do something." It takes no courage, it takes no toughness to actually dilute a child's education, and that's what we're talking about. When we talk about splintering the attention of teachers, it's very important that we not just talk in the abstract here, that we talk about what happens to children. What we're talking about is what happens in the real world.

In Waterloo I met a science teacher who is already working 12-hour days. With his new calendar, he'll work even more. He spends the time setting up his labs, dealing with the experiments, putting a lot of joy and energy into his work. He has no idea how he can make this new calendar work and raise his own family. That's a detail that this government is not prepared to even contend with, because we find ourselves standing here in the middle of a time-allocated bill that does not permit the real world to come in and make these people accountable for what they want to do to that science teacher and to other people.

For example, I spoke to Carol, who has four advanced English classes. She has four classes at 75 minutes each. That's 30% more children to look after. Over a period of time this will become apparent to the students and parents of this province. The members opposite cannot persuade any of us that if you assign 30% more students to a teacher, somehow that's a better-quality education. She has four advanced English classes; she has 30% more students. That means she has 30% more papers to grade and to record. She has to provide student attention and individual advice, makeup tests, get tutoring, touch base with the students.

She has had to suspend her writers' club. She's going to keep it going on her own time and meet the students in the hallways, but she can't actually go any more to the evening meetings they've had since 1989 for promising writers in that school, because she simply doesn't have the time to do it.

This is the real world that the Harris government and the Harris chopping up and dilution of education won't come to terms with. They won't answer the teachers like Carol, who put their heart and soul into this system, and now they're asking them to put in something less, just like they have in the health system, just like they've taken away the possibility of excellence.

Why do we still have an exodus of doctors in this province? Not because of the pay. We have an exodus because doctors do not believe we have a government or a policy or an attitude on the part of the government that actually connotes respect for excellence in the system. This is a government that doesn't believe in excellence when it comes to public service, when it comes to the things we provide to people in our communities. The government, I'm sure, when it sat in Mike Harris's office — we have a lot of what the media call ambient sound in the background here from the members. They're good at ambient sound. What they're not good at is holding their Premier to account, because we know they made all this up in the Premier's office. We know that most of the members opposite weren't given a say. But they still are vigorous in their defence of the indefensible. Instead, when they did their calculation, they said —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please, member for Ottawa-Rideau.

Mr Kennedy: "Look, in health care who's going to notice? Who's going to really notice the quiet sound of that patient who's not getting the care they deserve in the emergency room hallway? Who's really there to keep count? We'll just pretend that things were always like that. We'll make things worse and we'll essentially, eventually detract and pull away from people's investment of trust in that system. We'll basically put ourselves on a track where we no longer have public health care."

That's exactly the process they're trying to replicate here in terms of public education. The big brains in the Premier's office, who probably have disdain for their back-bench, as they do for the opposite side and the public as a whole, said: "We can take money out of that system. We'll just attack teachers. While people aren't looking, we'll take money out of the system. We'll do less for each individual student, and they'll not catch us because who's really going to be able to tell? These are just kids, after all. We'll throw them some textbooks."

The textbooks, from talking to some of the teachers, were done in such haste, provided in such haste, ordered in such haste, which this government's political propaganda calendar, derived most likely in the Premier's office, required them to do, to order them in a two-week period, to not even see sample copies, that some of those textbooks that have been delivered to some of the schools are now proving to be erasable because they're printed so badly. It's that kind of thing that this group of individuals in this House should feel themselves held accountable for, and they still don't. They still don't feel that they need to talk to Carol about how she is going to find the time to telephone parents for parents' meetings, to meet with

guidance counsellors, social workers, special-ed teachers and librarians, to look and see whether students are meeting their Ontario school requirements, to do the photocopying, update the courses, to do the new computer procedures, to do the student discipline.

1700

If teachers were held to the same standard we were in this House, if the time we spent in this House was regarded as our classroom time, we would have our pay cut by 80%, if that's what this government was trying to do on a consistent basis.

This government is trying to pretend, it's trying to fool the public on a basic, fundamental principle of education. If we're indeed going to have a well-educated citizenry — and there's an effort on the government side to change the purpose of education from producing citizens into consumers or employees or employers and somehow discount what it can really contribute to society and how we should measure it — we're going to have to have motivated teachers who have adequate preparation time, who are able to pull together not just their day and their week but their entire year in order to make things happen for their students. We also have to have their confidence that there are people in this House, sitting in these chairs, voting on these bills, who are prepared to be accountable for the kind of things that we throw them: curriculum without textbooks and schedules without ability to make them happen.

When we look at what happens to this bill that is under time allocation and is about to go whizzing out the door like so many of the misadventures from this government, what it's intended to do is land like a hand grenade in the school boards and negotiating rooms around this province to make it still more difficult. It doesn't solve anything. We've got 600 schools being closed around the province; 180 schools confirmed for Toronto. It's going to be a hellish time for people genuinely concerned with public education. What we want to tell those people is not to give up, not to take this government as reflective of the province, because fundamentally, as it is in so many other things, this government is out of touch.

Mr Marchese: I've got to say it's never a great time to speak to a time allocation motion, because in effect what these bills do is to throttle debate on issues of importance to this House and to the people outside of this place. But it is before us, and we are forced to speak to it, obviously. I'm happy to be making comments with respect to this, because I am very connected to this issue and have a long history around it.

I feel for the viewers, because they are so beleaguered by this government that they don't quite understand often which side they're on. All I can say to those who are watching this program on a regular basis is to trust their instincts. If you trust those instincts, you will more or less know at the end of the day which side you're on. Choosing a side, in my view, is an important part of the political process. I do this on a regular basis; in fact, I did it 20 years ago. That's why I joined the New Democratic Party.

Today, listening to the Minister of Education when he was speaking about World Teachers' Day — we were celebrating World Teachers' Day today — and he spoke with such elegance and praise for those wonderful teachers in the system, I thought, "What a pitiful political display of posturing by this minister and this government." They are utterly shameless. While these teachers have been whacked by this government on a daily basis —

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I'm just wondering if there's a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum?

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. I was waiting for them to come in, because the member for Algoma did want the members to listen to my speech; I have no doubt about that.

I was at the point where I was saying that this government has been whacking teachers on a daily basis and they continue to do it under the guise of: "We are doing more for those kids. We care about the kids. We care about quality." It's a wonderful thing that these people do, because for many people, the posturing works.

Here we are celebrating World Teachers' Day in the context of a couple of years of abuse and violence against teachers by this government, by the Premier and by the minister. I think people are following this debate, by and large. Some people will be confused, I have no doubt, but I marvel at the Minister of Education, who is a very smooth minister. You notice every day he's very smooth, never answers questions, sticks to the message. Every now and then he gets quoted in the paper where he says — he used this expression the other day — "I cannot discern." It's a beautiful word, "discern." It's abstract but it speaks to his qualities of observation, discernment.

He says, "I cannot discern for the life of me why teachers in this province wouldn't do the extracurricular activities." Imagine. He's been badgering teachers, abusing, whacking them over the head daily, and then he says, "I cannot discern for the life of me why these people can't just do the extracurricular activities." Can you believe that? I can't.

He was quoted the other day as saying something to the effect of: "I really don't see any reason why in Ontario they can't teach any extra time. It's not a big deal to teach an extra period, surely. All we're asking them to do is just teach a little bit longer."

It goes well with the general public, who say: "That's right. Those teachers are hardly working. I work longer hours than they do, and they shouldn't be paid what they are being paid." It plays right into the hands of Tories and Reform. They're good, close cousins. It plays into that ideology.

I remind you, the North American free trade agreement was all about prosperity and jobs, and what are we getting? People are working harder, longer, for less. The bank mergers are intended, banks say, to create more jobs.

The strategy of Tories everywhere, and the federal Liberals, is to get people to work longer and harder for less. The MAI, the multilateral agreement on investment, which is a charter for corporations —

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): Didn't they put that on the slow track?

Mr Marchese: The member from Windsor — what was that?

Interjection: Windsor-Riverside.

Mr Marchese: I love it when the member for Windsor-Riverside is here because he gets me going and I want his participation. Make sure I hear you well because I want your participation.

The multilateral agreement on investment: a charter of rights for corporations. We have no corresponding charter of rights for workers, but we have a charter of rights for corporations. Why? In order to get people to work harder, longer, for less.

You, the viewers out there, relate to that because it's exactly what all of you are experiencing — working harder, working longer, working for less, with insecurities that abound, with unemployment that abounds. You have a good understanding, it seems to me, about what the nature of this fight is all about. That is why I ask you to relate to this fight that this government has waged against teachers, as they say in their guise, "We are here working for children, trying to make education a little better for them and trying to help teachers out." The member for Scarborough Centre said they're fighting for teachers. No, member for Scarborough Centre, everyone knows you're fighting against them, based on everything that you have done, not working for them.

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Those of you who are watching understand or ought to understand the nature of this battle, because this Tory government and their Liberal cousins at the federal level are making us work harder, longer, for less. That's what's happening.

Bill 160 is not about giving more money to the educational system. Why would any government want to centralize education finance if it were not to take money away? Why?

Mr Bert Johnson: I have the answer.

Mr Marchese: The strategy, M. Bert, is to control it to take money away from the educational system under the guise of giving more for those poor little kids and those poor struggling teachers who are working on this difficult system that they are fixing. You have M. Harris and M. Johnson saying, "It's not about attacking teachers, it's about" —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Fort York, may I remind you that you should refer to the members by their ridings.

Mr Marchese: I was talking about the Premier, I was talking about the Minister of Education, to whom I applied names because it's good for the public to know them by their names and their titles.

Bill 160 is intended to centralize education finance in order to take money away from public education. That's what it's about.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Wrong.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Wrong.

Mr Marchese: You have the whiners on the other side, the apologists saying, "No, no." But people know.

Mr Duncan: How much did you cut out of education when you were in office?

Mr Marchese: Windsor — where are you from again? Somewhere from Windsor. Here we go, from Windsor-Walkerville. I love them Liberals. God, you've got to love them. In terms of what they're going to tell you about education, you're going to have to very seriously consider those opinions because they're going to tell you everything you need to know and hear. They're going to repeal Bill 160 —

Interjection: Are you?

Mr Marchese: We're on the books as stating we're going to repeal it. In fact, we argue that 10% of education finance should be paid for locally, locally based and controlled.

Mr Duncan: Unlike public auto insurance.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Member for Windsor-Walkerville, come to order.

Mr Marchese: You have these fine Liberals. They will never make such a claim. We believe there should be local control and that's why we say 10% should be controlled by local boards of education.

This party on the right of me says that they are going to put more in education and in fact they're going to put more into health. You know how they're going to do that? Not by making sure that we take billions away from that income tax scheme that they have proposed where the wealthy Ontarians benefit. They're not going to take money away from that, because they said, "Oh, we can't get elected if we do that." So where are they going to find the money? They say, "From a growing economy." Oh? We are almost in the depth of a recession worldwide. Half of the world is in a recession, and these guys, including you folks, are hoping the economy is going to continue so they can continue to put more in education and health.

How are they going to do it if the money is not there? How are they going to find the \$5 billion the Tories are spending to give away to the wealthy when the recession is around the corner? Where are you going to find the money? And you still want cuts in programs and you still want to give away charity to the rich because, "Those poor people, they need it."

You've got to give more money to the rich because the income gap is just not enough. We've got to make it bigger. We've got to make the gap between the rich and the poor bigger because the gap is not big enough. Charity for the rich is what this government is all about. God, if we pursue this strategy, unemployment should diminish by the millions.

We have a serious problem on our hands in this province and in this country. The objective of this government is not children; it's not teachers. When they talk about

teachers teaching extra time, the member for Algoma reminds you and the audience in particular that we're talking about an extra period.

To give you an example, because you've got concretize the situation, think of an English teacher —

Mr Duncan: What was that?

Mr Marchese: For those members on the right of me, to make concrete, concretize, more or less.

Think of an English teacher. You know that in the educational system at the high school level we've been trying to introduce English across the curriculum. You know that. I think Tories know that, at least one or two of them out of the whole bunch. If you want students to learn to write, what do you think a teacher has to do? You've got to give assignments. Some assignments are two pages long; some assignments are five pages long. Imagine having 150 students and even an extra period.

Mr Wildman: That's 25 more students.

Mr Marchese: That's 25 more students, because that's what we're talking about. If you give those students yet another assignment, and you, the teacher, have to mark those papers, because if you don't mark them with suggestions on how to improve that paper, those students won't learn, imagine the enormity of the task. The more you give an English teacher, a history or geography teacher and the like things of this sort to do where you require of them to give more assignments in order for the students to learn to write, how does a teacher find the time to do that?

Mr Froese: How do they?

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: The poor Tories are whining. The poor Tories are saying, "Those poor teachers are whining." I'm assuming that was the whine. Is that correct?

Teachers are put into a very difficult position to do the right thing in their classrooms if we expect our students to learn better, to have a better command of more subjects such as English. They cannot do it, and so teachers resort to giving fewer assignments, which means students do not learn. Even the kids of these Tories will not learn very well. That's really what it means.

They are assaulting teachers on the basis that the public out there says teachers are greedy, teachers earn too much money and teachers have too much time off.

Mr Froese: I never said that.

Mr Marchese: The Tories don't say those things; they just hope that parents believe those things on the inferences made by Minister Johnson. So when Minister Johnson says, "I don't quite discern why it is that they're upset," he hopes the public out there believes him and shares the view on the basis of common understanding that teachers earn too much for the time they put in and that they should take less and should work more to adjust to the ideology of this government.

We've got a morale problem in the teaching profession unlike any we have ever seen before. Morale is at its lowest, and we cannot improve that morale for a long, long time. Certainly this government won't be able to

patch that up, I can tell you that, and no matter what they say or do, it will not patch this up.

Mr Bert Johnson: A few dollars will do it.

Mr Marchese: Yes, throw a little money at them, I suppose, eh, Tories. That will do it.

Education is a great equalizer or has the potential to be a great equalizer, so that poor people have an equal chance to make it in this society. What this government does by underfunding it, by throttling it, by undermining teachers and fighting them on a regular basis, is it undermines the ability of teachers to deliver the quality that so many of us desire for our kids. So many young people enter the education system with unequal conditions, and unless we have the best system possible, that is funded well, where teachers are respected, those students who come from poor working-class homes will not get the equalization they hope for. It means that we will perpetuate a class system, as we have always done, and that equalization will not come.

That's what's happening to our system, and I worry about that. I worry about the potential to destroy our educational system and to destroy whatever little good there was that we were trying to build up.

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All I urge teachers to do is to continue to be vigilant and to continue to fight this government, and urge those who are watching to continue to support a public system so as not to allow this government to continue to privatize it in a way that will create a two-tier system, one for the poor and one for the wealthy. That's all I can urge those who are watching to do. If they want to get involved with us, they should call us. They'll find us in the telephone book. It's a good fight to fight and it's something that I think many of us believe in.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm glad to have the opportunity to join this debate, although it is again one of those debates that I wish we did not have to have.

I was listening to my friend and colleague from Fort York as he was outlining point after point what this Tory government is doing to education, and the attack on teachers. As he mentioned and others have mentioned, today of course is World Teachers' Day.

Mr Wildman: How ironic.

Mr Silipo: It's very ironic, I agree with my colleague from Algoma. I was reflecting on what happened earlier today. You will remember, Speaker, when you were sitting over here as one of our members and our colleague from Algoma asked for unanimous consent for us to wear these simple buttons that commemorate today, World Teachers' Day. We didn't get agreement from some of the Tory members for us to wear these buttons in the House today because under the rules we can't wear even a simple button like this without there being unanimous agreement by members of the Legislative Assembly.

As I've been thinking about this on and off this afternoon and looking now at the button, I wonder, what is it that gives members opposite a big problem with this button? I look at it and it says on it "World Teachers' Day" across the top, and along the bottom is the same in

French, «Journée mondiale des enseignants», so that can't be what's offensive to members across. The middle of it is essentially a big green apple, which has always been symbolic of teachers and teaching. Imposed on that green apple is a map of the world, and at the bottom of that green apple, again imposed on it, is a picture or a diagram of two children, I gather, climbing what looks like a stylized staircase. On that stylized staircase it says, "Public Education Works." Maybe that's what bothers them. They don't like the fact that it's actually working.

Mr Wildman: They say it's broken.

Mr Silipo: They say that it's broken, it doesn't fit into their theory of the crisis, so maybe it has something to do with that. But I think it's even simpler than that. I think it actually has to do with the fact that had they agreed to this, they actually would have agreed to something they couldn't quite, in that instant, control. We know how hung up this particular government is on having to control everything to its umpteenth detail.

That's what this bill is about. The bill in front of us that they're time-allocating ironically enough is about putting more and more control into the hands of the minister to define what is instruction. Again it's taking the approach that this government has taken so far, as they have begun and as they have proceeded to dismantle our education system piece by piece now to the point where they are so narrowly defining what will be instruction and what will not be instruction to complement their in-classroom versus out-of-classroom funding formula, to the point that things will be defined so narrowly that many services we have taken for granted and have quite frankly expected of our teachers will not fit within this definition.

Look at one very simple example: the role that is played by teachers in terms of guidance counselling in our secondary schools, a service which, whatever we may think — does it work perfectly? Can it be improved? Of course it can be improved, just like many other aspects of our education system, but a very important educational service provided by our teachers is that they help our young people determine what they're going to do when they leave high school, as they begin to plan what they're going to do when they leave high school. Well, that will no longer be covered within the definition of instruction.

It's fine for the Tories to say that instruction is what happens within the four walls of the classroom. I can remember, and I know it still happens today, that a good amount of guidance in fact takes place within the four walls of the classroom, but a good enough amount of it also takes place in other parts of the school building.

To say that something like that should not fit as part of the instructional day or as part of the definition of instruction is a classic example of the kind of narrow-mindedness that is driving this Minister of Education and the Harris government as they are continuing to take away, piece by piece, the very foundation of our school system. It's the sense of wanting to control every little piece at every step of the way that is driving this government to the point where they know that if people out there begin to understand what's going on — as they are beginning to — they

have to jump in and counter that with advertisement after advertisement on the TV screens, on the radio, in the newspapers and in the flyers they send home, because quite frankly they're afraid that if they don't do that and if they don't try to portray their vision of the world and what they're doing to our school system, the people will actually understand what is going on.

We had the Minister of Education today in a scrum, as well as in this House, try to justify the cuts to the system and the crazy timelines they've imposed and then try to explain, in his view, how the changes will mean more time between students and teachers. It's again the doubletalk. If what this government wanted was more time between teachers and students, if what they wanted was for our teachers to spend more time with the students they now are teaching, they would have taken up the offer that federation after federation and teacher after teacher have made to look at solutions like extending the length of the periods, to actually lengthen the amount of time that teachers teach each child, each student, because then you are ensuring that the teachers are spending more time with each student.

But that of course is not the objective. The objective here is to have fewer teachers in the system do more, and doing more means having more children, more young people, more students to teach. You cannot have a situation, in our high schools particularly, where you expect teachers to teach more students — as our colleague Mr Wildman says, 25 more students on average; one additional class — and expect the quality of that teaching to be as good as the current teaching. It can be done — there is no doubt that it fits in the schedule; there are problems, but it will fit — but you cannot tell me and you cannot convince anybody out there that the result is going to be better education.

Better education comes when teachers, yes, have clear expectations set of them, and we should do that, but better education comes when teachers have the support of those who run the system, from the Minister of Education right on through, and are supported on a day-to-day basis to improve the quality of what they do. If there is an area where quality rather than quantity matters, surely it's in our school system. Surely what we want to see in our school system is not simply to be able to add up the numbers at the end of the day or at the end of the year and say: "Here we are. Aren't we great? We're actually able to have fewer teachers teach more kids." Somehow that's more efficient, but is it better? I don't think so.

What is better is when our teachers are supported — as I say, on the basis of very clear expectations, but are supported — and prepared and assisted in providing the kind of quality education we want for our kids today and that they will need to be able to survive and deal with the complex and ever-changing world they will live in and have to work in tomorrow.

That's what it's about, and you don't do it by taking around a billion dollars out of our school system, as this government is doing. You don't do that by simply expecting teachers to teach more students. You do that by say-

ing: "Let's see how we can focus our attention. Let's see how we can focus our efforts. Let's see how we can support teachers to do what they are doing better, not simply to do more at a lower level of quality."

1730

That's what's happening out there in our schools. That's why we have with this new funding formula situations in which school after school, whether it's here in Toronto or throughout the province, is going to be going through the potential of closing.

In my own community in west-end Toronto, a Catholic school like St Josaphat, where parents will be gathering tonight to discuss the possibility of that school closing, is one of the 29 on the list the Catholic board here in Toronto has had to look at and is looking at; schools like St Rita's, R.W. Scott, St Raymond's, schools that are now providing a good service to their community, providing good education. St Peter's, St Lucy's and many others in west-end Toronto are being looked at only because that school board, the Catholic school board, which before thought it was actually going to get more money out of this funding formula, is now discovering the truth. The truth is that it means less money for them in the Catholic system as well as less money in the public school system on the other side.

What's happening? There's less money in our system because of the actions of the Mike Harris government. Teachers are being asked to teach more students and the quality of our education system is continuing to go down directly because of the actions of this government. That's why we stand opposed to what this government is doing through this specific bill, because it narrows down education in a way we believe should not be done. That's why we will continue to fight and we will continue to put forward alternatives to what this government is doing, not only in terms of being willing to roll back the provisions of Bill 160 and all the changes that those entail, but also being prepared to put money back into the education system and to propose a way in which we would actually do that by taking back portions of the tax cut for those top 6% of taxpayers who get most of the benefit of the tax cut, or a large chunk of it.

We believe fundamentally that those changes need to be made. We'll certainly have more and more opportunities to talk about that. But I just want again to emphasize what I see is a paranoia that's setting in in this government in terms of how they feel they have to control every little thing they do. The public out there quite frankly is well beyond beginning to understand what is going on. They can continue to spend money on advertising, they can continue to try to control and legislate all the minutiae of what goes on in the classroom, but at the end of the day people will remember that what this government did, what the Harris government did was to begin to dismantle the system of education that we have built up over years, which, yes, needs to be improved, can be improved, but will not be improved one iota by the actions of the Harris government.

Mr Wildman: I rise to participate in this debate wearing two hats — I guess, three — (1) as the House leader for our caucus here in this Legislature; (2) as the education critic for our caucus and (3) as a parent of a child in the education system in Ontario.

First, in my role as House leader I want to say at the outset how much I regret the irony of a time allocation motion on this bill as it relates to teacher instructional time on World Teachers' Day. I regret it for a number of reasons.

When we were debating Bill 63, we had gotten to the point under these new rules where there was only 10 minutes per speaker left. Even if all the members of the opposition who had not yet participated in the debate were to speak, it would not have taken very long for the bill to have gotten through second reading. There was absolutely no need to introduce a time allocation motion except, I guess, for two reasons. The first reason was that the member for Durham East was speaking, and not even his own members could taken any more of that. That led them to introduce a time allocation motion.

The other reason is that it has become routine for this government. It's automatic that on any important bill there will be a time allocation motion, despite the fact that under these new rules any government would be able to get any controversial matter through very quickly.

As the critic for our caucus on education matters, I want to refer to the three groups that are the most important in the education system: the students, the teachers and the parents. I'd like to refer to some e-mails I've received from each of these groups. The first is from a parent. Her name is Sally Clarke, from Ottawa. She says:

"I regret that teachers have been alienated by the way these measures were introduced. For example, a curriculum to take effect in September was released in August. That is one example of gross lack of consideration for the teachers we employ. I think it is shameful to treat any worker this way. There seems to be almost an attitude of 'We have a majority and that gives us the right to do exactly what we want so get with the program or too bad.' This is a sorry example of leadership. It is especially unfortunate because I think the majority of people, including teachers, support" a lot of the changes that have been proposed. That's debatable, but this is what Ms Clarke sees.

"I should not need to point out that teachers, like any other worker, work best when they feel valued and they have the support they need. Teachers are in the best position to know the support they need in their particular school. Schools should have the latitude to work with their teachers to decide these things and not be subject to centralized authority that cannot possibly know best. I feel the teachers' unions have done a great deal of work" — and it's hard to read here — "concerning the needed reforms, protecting teachers and promoting" — I can't read this. It's a very poor copy. I'm sorry. But you get the point that she puts forward.

The next one I'd like to read is from a student. This is a student from Carleton Place, in eastern Ontario. Her name is Amy Nadeau. She says:

"I am a grade 11 student from Notre Dame Catholic High School in Carleton Place Ontario. In the past three weeks I have been listening carefully to what has been going on with the education system....

"The situation that the teachers are in is awful and I truly believe that they are entitled to fight for what they believe is right. It is sad to see that it has come to them going on strike. If this can be helped the process should be started now."

The last one is from a teacher. This is from Carol Neuman in Scarborough. She says:

"I am experiencing the chaos of the mean-spirited Tory changes, changes driven by a bottom line engine seeking to demoralize and reduce teaching staff.

"I have been assigned four out of four classes to teach:" — because of the instructional time — "100 students in a full-time English timetable. I have four advanced English classes (75 min each) and I work all day except for lunch, all day every day. And this semester there are 25 more students who wish to talk to me; make up missed tests; get tutoring; and touch base. I'm happy to be available to them, but I am also seeing my previous students who require letters of recommendation for part-time jobs, for university, for co-op, or who want to discuss next year's option selections or graduation choices. I have ex-students now in university who return for reunion.

"I have no time this semester to meet with guidance counsellors, social workers, special ed teachers, librarians, or the ESL teachers about students. I have no time to scan OSR files for information about my students' schooling in Ontario, or to verify that all prerequisites have been taken. I have no time to read ministry documents, or to order audiovisual materials. Photocopying, updating course outlines, and learning new computer procedures are distant notions of a bygone era.

"Student contact, as you well know, also involves discipline in the hallways — no fighting or yelling or eating or swearing or graffiti. New this semester is attendance monitoring and discipline matters dealt with in 'a just-in-time' philosophy of deliverance; triage-style damage control. Telephoning homes about upcoming parent night is impossible. My 'extracurricular' writers' club, which used to meet every Thursday to workshop creative writing, and which ran, unbroken, since 1989 has been suspended. Those writers are still sharing their works-in-progress with me, in crowded hallways, where they try to get encouragement for their efforts." This is the situation that this government has produced. This is what your changes have done for this teacher and her students in Scarborough. That's what this has done. No one can claim it has improved the quality of education for this teacher's students. It's not just the working conditions for this teacher; the quality of education for this English teacher's students has been harmed.

1740

The government members don't want to hear this. They don't want to understand what is really happening in the system. When they hear that a teacher is teaching four out of four, all day, with no break except for a lunch period, no time to do preparation during the day, no time to talk to other teachers and guidance counsellors about students, no time to give extra help, no time for extracurricular activities, they just shake their heads and say, "What a lazy teacher."

They don't want to understand what their changes have done. They don't want to understand what taking all these millions of dollars out of the education system and cutting the total number of teachers in secondary schools in Ontario has done for the quality of education for students. This is what it has done. It's not me saying it; I didn't solicit this e-mail. It just came from a teacher who is discouraged and unhappy about the fact that she can't meet the needs of her students because of the changes this government has wrought.

There's a basic question that hasn't been answered in this debate, and because the debate is being cut off it won't be answered. In requiring teachers to teach an extra period and in defining the instructional time the way the government has, the government hasn't made clear what happens to teachers like guidance counsellors and librarians. There is no mention of guidance counsellors and librarians in this bill. There is no indication of what happens to a full-time teacher who is doing guidance or a full-time teacher who is responsible for a library. What happens? Must they teach 1,250 minutes? Must they teach seven classes out of eight? Because if they do, that is the end of guidance as we know it in the system, and it is the end of library resource centres as we know them. There is no mention here. These are the kinds of things we should be debating, we should be understanding. The government members say, "All this does is set out what instructional time is, when we already know it." We don't know it for these teachers and we don't know what the effect is going to be for students.

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): It's certainly a pleasure to conclude debate on this particular issue today. At the outset I want to congratulate both my colleagues from Wentworth North and Scarborough Centre, because I thought that during the course of their comments they focused directly on the issue at hand in terms of the instructional time. In that context they brought a localized perspective to the issues that are important to them in their constituencies. More importantly, they brought perspective to this debate about particular school environments in their communities. It's in that context that I'm confident they have a sound understanding of the issues, a sound understanding of the implications and the necessity of the reforms that this government is advancing with respect to education in this province.

I have to say to my friend and colleague from Algoma, who made comment about our colleague from Durham East, who I can appreciate we all know has a very animated approach to debate in this House — I can say with-

out hesitation that the member for Durham East has participated in education caucus committees each and every week since the government was formed 1995. It's that level of dedication —

Mr Wildman: He said there's been an inordinate number of changes in education.

Mr Smith: It's an indication of that particular member's strong commitment to education and the perspective he brings that he would attend those meetings on a weekly basis.

Very clearly, the issue at hand is the need to provide a very simple definition to put into context the meaning of "instructional time." Bill 63 does that. I have to say, having participated in a number of debates and consultations over the past year and a half, some of which involved my colleagues the education critics from Algoma and Fort William, that I don't recall specifics coming forward where there was a need to define instructional time in the context in which we're having to do that today. I don't recall that. I'm sure if that happened, they will take time to correct me at a later date, but very clearly that meaning in the past has been commonly understood and it simply meant time spent in the classroom teaching children.

I was pleased today when I sat here and listened to the member for Dovercourt, who all members know was a previous Minister of Education, and who is always articulate and constructive in his comments, though I obviously do not necessarily embrace the perspective he brings to the debate. I think it's important to look back at Hansard in April 1992, where we see then Minister Silipo indicating:

"A new approach to school funding is a critical component of change in the education sector. The current system, designed in the late 1960s, is losing its ability to meet the education needs of learners and to support the kinds of education programs and services we need in the fast-changing world of the 1990s. We need a new system that is fair to local taxpayers and to students."

While I don't expect the member for Dovercourt to embrace our method of implementation, I think what underlies that particular statement by the former minister is the need and recognition by all members that education reform is necessary in this province. Certainly the issue of reform is not new to any extent and is one that has been studied considerably over the course of the past two decades. The difference is that this government is prepared to act and move ahead.

From that context, we have to move to a perspective whereby the old system wasn't meeting the needs of students and teachers. The system was simply causing drag on teachers and students in the system. It's not about bad teachers, it's not about bad students; it's about a system that has become outdated and one that needs renewal and redefinition.

I listened to the Liberal member for York South with some fascination, I must say — I don't say that from an admiration perspective by any means — to the perspective and the ability that individual brings to try to formulate a policy perspective when a policy doesn't exist for their party. He consistently grasped at some sense of what the

Liberal position might be. I simply say to him, I'd rather be looking ahead to the future, as this government is, than looking over my shoulder at the past, which is where the Liberal Party of Ontario is presently with respect to education reform.

We've heard a lot about the lack of vision and a comprehensive approach to education. I want to re-emphasize, because it's important, and restate what I believe is a very obvious position with respect to this government, and that's a position this government brought forward in opposition and brought forward once it became government: a comprehensive plan to fundamentally reform the education system in this province.

There should be no surprises over the government's intent to proceed with reforms in three fundamental areas: finance, governance and curriculum. I think there's not much criticism — there will be some criticism, I suppose, but there's genuine consensus on the merit and value and the significant improvement this government has made through its curriculum reforms in this province. We're seeing, on a day-to-day basis, constructive feedback coming into the ministry, whereby teachers are congratulating the government in terms of the important changes they've made.

In fact, when you talk to front-line teachers in this province, there are always two issues they raise, notwithstanding some of the philosophical ones; that is, the need to address the size of administration in the school system in this province and to provide them with some very straightforward and clear and concise guidelines with respect to curriculum. The government has listened to teachers on both those accounts by addressing the size of governance, by addressing the size of administration and the dollars that were being drawn away from the classroom by the administration within the system of education.

We've also heard from them the need to redefine and bring clarity to the curriculum. Again, I think there's a strong, strong success story in this province, one that has been provided by the leadership of the Minister of Education and Training in this province, leadership that has brought about a new and redesigned curriculum designed for the students of the future.

Equally important in that context is to continue to listen to teachers, as this government has done. My Liberal colleague from York South once again said we have shut teachers out of the process. That's simply not the case. In my capacity as parliamentary assistant, I have seen opportunities where teachers have participated in every corner of the reform process. That's where their input is required: when there's a need for professional academic input into curriculum standards, when they can participate in professional development, when they can participate in meaningful opportunities such as province-wide testing. In exit interviews, while completing their testing experience, we're seeing teachers describe that experience as one of the most constructive professional development experiences in their teaching profession.

There are some very positive things that are happening in this province with respect to the inclusion of teachers in

the process. We're asking for their professional advice where they know most, and that's in terms of the delivery of education in the classroom.

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I believe my colleague from Fort York said that the objective of government is not about students, not about teachers. That is why we as a government went about fundamentally redesigning the way education was financed in this province, by making a departure from the old way whereby school boards lost their sense of priorities, moving to a system where we're financing students and front-line teachers by providing a stable funding environment so they understand, through a difficult transition period, where they will be over the next three-year period.

That is the type of information this government has placed before the education community. It has not been done in secret. Certainly the process of redesigning the system is not easy. It's challenging, and that's why we've spent some \$385 million on transitional funding for school boards in this province, on the understanding that the process they were proceeding through was significant and warranted the financial assistance of the provincial government.

As I said at the outset, the need to define instructional time through Bill 63 was necessary. I think there are those individuals who have broadened their understanding of the definition of instructional time. That is why the need for this bill was pursued. It's in that context that the government felt the spirit of the law that had been passed under Bill 160 was compromised and that clarity and redefinition of that instructional issue was required.

As my colleagues have indicated and I think it's important to re-emphasize, cafeteria supervision is not instructional time. Neither is hall monitoring. Instructional time is time in the classroom teaching students.

It's in that context that we've brought forward this particular motion. The motion is not for the purpose of stifling debate. There has been considerable debate over the past year and a half on educational issues, and quite frankly I continue to hear the same arguments from the opposition parties, which I expect. That argument has been heard and in some cases accepted through amendment, or rejected.

It's in that context that we have to move to the next level. Critically important, the next level is about managing the implementation. I believe that's what parents and students alike want to be satisfied about in this province. They want to know that their child is going to be picked up at their home safely; that they're going to be transported safely if they require busing services; that they're going to arrive at their destination on time; that their learning environment is clean and appropriate, well maintained and conducive to a good learning experience. That's what parents wanted to know and that's what they wanted to be satisfied about with respect to education in this province.

The key to this issue is about putting more money in the classroom and investing in those students and those front-line teachers. Much has been said and some suggestions made that this government doesn't care about teachers.

Quite the contrary. It's not about not caring about teachers. We are asking teachers to do more, yes, we are asking them to do more and there is nothing wrong for that perspective. As someone who previously worked in the municipal public sector, we were consistently asked, quite frankly through the social contract — I happened to be a participant in that, through the NDP —

Mr Wildman: So it was your fault.

Mr Smith: No. It was not a decision. I was in fact a recipient of and a participant in your policy decision. That was a decision you made, perhaps a necessary decision in your day, but one that we have to take to the next step, because simply stalling things and stopping things really isn't bringing remedy to the issues at hand. That's fundamentally what is needed in the education system: Fundamental reform that is meaningful and is leading to the broadening and strengthening of the education system in this province.

Through that context, my colleagues or my caucus colleagues have worked diligently to participate locally in educational experience. I speak to them on a regular basis in terms of the experiences they are witnessing in classrooms across this province. Government members are consulting with teachers locally in the community, with school board officials. At the end of the day we may not always agree with what may have to occur, but the perspective that each and every one of them is bringing to the debate within caucus and outside certainly strengthens the policy decisions that are having to be made by this government.

As we look back to where we have been, it's important to realize and revisit some of the things of this government. There's a substantial list of things this government has done to improve the education system in this province. The most successful, as I suggested earlier and one we continue to build upon, is the experience we witnessed in the elementary panel, and now we go forward as we continue to work and develop a new and strengthened secondary school curriculum in this province, a process where teachers were involved. They brought their academic and professional experiences to documents that are important for the future. We've seen the introduction of province-wide testing and the importance of that so that we are able to provide benchmarks of where we are at in this province with respect to student achievement.

Of equal important to that issue of province-wide testing and benchmarks is how we use that information to continue to better the curriculum materials, to continue to better the professional development that teachers will experience over the course of the next few years.

We've brought about easy-to-understand report cards so that when students take report cards to their homes to discuss with their parents, they're understood and they can be transported from board to board or area to area. So whether you're studying in Sudbury, London or Toronto, there's a common understanding of what a percentage grade or a letter grade means in this province, something that most parents had no understanding of but clearly had asked to support.

We've heard a lot about average class sizes. This government is the first to address the class size issue. The opposition parties may not like what we're doing with respect to class size but it wasn't the NDP and it wasn't the Liberals that put into statute the need to address class sizes. As well, in making that broader policy decision we provided the financial tools that are necessary to implement that average class size decision in the form of some \$1.2 billion which, as the minister indicated this afternoon during question period, alone equates to some 3,000 teaching positions in this province.

We've brought more resources to the classroom, more software. Certainly we've doubled the opportunities for tutors in the classroom. We've protected funding for special education and created an envelope of over \$1 billion for special education students in this province. We continue to work on a new high school system, one that's relevant and prepares secondary school students both for the workplace and for their post-secondary education. We started education planning in grade 7 so that the process is built upon as they move from the elementary system into the secondary system. It's in that context that we will continue to see our facilities renewed and the need for this type of motion to proceed so that we can get to the next stage of effective management of the education system.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: If you notice the clock, we have gone past the adjournment time. It's 6:02.

The Acting Speaker: We end the debate at 6 o'clock, it's my understanding. Please continue.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: To the members for Algoma and Dovercourt, I was watching my clock to the side here, which said 6 o'clock, and my watch, which said 6 o'clock. My ruling is that the debate ended at 6 o'clock, so we'll now put the question.

I see that clock.

Mr Bradley: The one we go by.

The Acting Speaker: No.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: If that clock is not the official clock, which is the official clock?

The Acting Speaker: The official clock is the clock which I go by, which is the clock on my desk. I believe that this —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. I think that it's a fair point that sometimes this clock is not accurate. We have noticed that before, but I can guarantee and assure

the member that according to the official clock, which is on my desk here, it was 6 o'clock. That is an issue that we need to perhaps take up, but by this clock, it was exactly 6 o'clock.

Now I will put the question. Mr Sterling has moved government motion number 29. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

Those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1802 to 1807.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Harnick, Charles	Parker, John L.
Bassett, Isabel	Harris, Michael D.	Preston, Peter
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Ross, Lillian
Brown, Jim	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Carroll, Jack	Johns, Helen	Saunderson, William
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Shea, Derwyn
Clement, Tony	Johnson, David	Sheehan, Frank
Danford, Harry	Jordan, W. Leo	Skarica, Toni
DeFaria, Carl	Kells, Morley	Smith, Bruce
Doyle, Ed	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Ecker, Janet	Leach, Al	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Leadston, Gary L.	Turnbull, David
Ford, Douglas B.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Vankoughnet, Bill
Fox, Gary	Maves, Bart	Villeneuve, Noble
Froese, Tom	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan	Young, Terence H.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Bradley, James J.	Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario
Brown, Michael A.	Cullen, Alex	McLeod, Lyn
Christopherson, David	Duncan, Dwight	Pouliot, Gilles
Cleary, John C.	Hoy, Pat	Silipo, Tony
Colle, Mike	Kormos, Peter	Wildman, Bud
Conway, Sean G.	Lessard, Wayne	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 57; the nays are 17.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock this evening.

The House adjourned at 1809.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

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Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Agostino, Dominic	Hamilton East / -Est	L	
Arnott, Ted	Wellington	PC	parliamentary assistant (Small Business) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur petites entreprises) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Baird, John R.	Nepcan	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Finances
Barrett, Toby	Norfolk	PC	
Bartolucci, Rick	Sudbury	L	
Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel	St Andrew-St Patrick	PC	Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Beaubien, Marcel	Lambton	PC	
Bisson, Gilles	Cochrane South / -Sud	ND	deputy New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Boushy, Dave	Sarnia	PC	
Boyd, Marion	London Centre / -Centre	ND	
Bradley, James J.	St Catharines	L	deputy opposition leader, opposition House leader / chef adjoint de l'opposition, chef parlementaire de l'opposition
Brown, Jim	Scarborough West / -Ouest	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Correctional Services / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Services correctionnels
Brown, Michael A.	Algoma-Manitoulin	L	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Caplan, David	Oriole	L	
Carr, Gary	Oakville South / -Sud	PC	
Carroll, Jack	Chatham-Kent	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Castrilli, Annamarie	Downsview	L	
Christopherson, David	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	ND	
Chudleigh, Ted	Halton North / -Nord	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Richesses naturelles
Churley, Marilyn	Riverdale	ND	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Cleary, John C.	Cornwall	L	
Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony	Brampton South / -Sud	PC	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Colle, Mike	Oakwood	L	
Conway, Sean G.	Renfrew North / -Nord	L	
Cordiano, Joseph	Lawrence	L	
Crozier, Bruce	Essex South / -Sud	L	
Cullen, Alex	Ottawa West / -Ouest	L	
Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne	London North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Curling, Alvin	Scarborough North / -Nord	L	deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Danford, Harry	Hastings-Peterborough	PC	parliamentary assistant (Agriculture and Food) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire (secteurs Agriculture et Alimentation) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
DeFaria, Carl	Mississauga East / -Est	PC	
Doyle, Ed	Wentworth East / -Est	PC	deputy government whip / whip adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Dwight	Windsor-Walkerville	L	
Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet	Durham West / -Ouest	PC	Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Elliott, Brenda	Guelph	PC	
Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L.	Parry Sound	PC	Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances
Fisher, Barbara	Bruce	PC	parliamentary assistant (Rural Affairs) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjointe parlementaire (secteur Affaires rurales) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim	Durham Centre / -Centre	PC	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Ford, Douglas B.	Etobicoke-Humber	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Fox, Gary	Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings / Prince Edward- Lennox-Hastings-Sud	PC	
Froese, Tom	St Catharines-Brock	PC	parliamentary assistant (Colleges and Universities) to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire (secteur collèges et universités) du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Galt, Doug	Northumberland	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de l'Environnement
Gerretsen, John	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	L	chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Gilchrist, Steve	Scarborough East / -Est	PC	parliamentary assistant (Municipal affairs – urban) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur urbain) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Grandmaître, Bernard	Ottawa East / -Est	L	
Gravelle, Michael	Port Arthur	L	
Grimmett, Bill	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire du président du Conseil de gestion
Guzzo, Garry J.	Ottawa-Rideau	PC	
Hampton, Howard	Rainy River	ND	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie	Oxford	PC	parliamentary assistant (Municipal affairs – rural) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur rural) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles	Willowdale	PC	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D.	Nipissing	PC	Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
Hastings, John	Etobicoke-Rexdale	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Transports
Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris	Victoria-Haliburton	PC	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines, deputy government House leader / Président du Conseil de gestion, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, vice- leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Hoy, Pat	Essex-Kent	L	
Hudak, Tim	Niagara South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre de la Santé
Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron	Burlington South / -Sud	PC	Minister of Long-Term Care, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Soins de longue durée, ministre délégué aux affaires des personnes âgées
Johns, Helen	Huron	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / adjointe parlementaire du ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Johnson, Bert	Perth	PC	Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président de la Chambre et Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Johnson, Hon / L'hon David	Don Mills	PC	Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Johnson, Ron	Brantford	PC	
Jordan, W. Leo	Lanark-Renfrew	PC	parliamentary assistant (Tourism) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Tourisme) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Kells, Morley	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	PC	
Kennedy, Gerard	York South / -Sud	L	
Klees, Frank	York-Mackenzie	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Kormos, Peter	Welland-Thorold	ND	
Kwinter, Monte	Wilson Heights	L	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	L	
Lankin, Frances	Beaches-Woodbine	ND	chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Leach, Hon / L'hon Al	St George-St David	PC	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Leadston, Gary L.	Kitchener-Wilmot	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Lessard, Wayne	Windsor-Riverside	ND	
Marchese, Rosario	Fort York	ND	
Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret	Mississauga South / -Sud	PC	Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Martel, Shelley	Sudbury East / -Est	ND	
Martin, Tony	Sault Ste Marie	ND	deputy New Democratic Party whip / whip adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Martiniuk, Gerry	Cambridge	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire du procureur général
Maves, Bart	Niagara Falls	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire du ministre du Travail
McGuinty, Dalton	Ottawa South / -Sud	L	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
McLean, Allan K.	Simcoe East / -Est	PC	
McLeod, Lyn	Fort William	L	
McLash, Frank	Kenora	L	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Morin, Gilles E.	Carleton East / -Est	L	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Munro, Julia	Durham-York	PC	
Murdoch, Bill	Grey-Owen Sound	PC	
Mushinski, Marilyn	Scarborough-Ellesmere	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjointe parlementaire du premier ministre
Newman, Dan	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre de la Santé
North, Peter	Elgin	Ind	
O'Toole, John R.	Durham East / -Est	PC	
Ouellette, Jerry J.	Oshawa	PC	
Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al	York Centre / -Centre	PC	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Parker, John L.	York East / -Est	PC	parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for native affairs / adjoint parlementaire du ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Patten, Richard	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	L	
Pettit, Trevor	Hamilton Mountain	PC	
Phillips, Gerry	Scarborough-Agincourt	L	
Pouliot, Gilles	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	ND	

Member / Député(e)	Constituency / Circonscription	Party / Parti	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Preston, Peter L.	Brant-Haldimand	PC	
Pupateilo, Sandra	Windsor-Sandwich	L	
Ramsay, David	Timiskaming	L	
Rollins, E.J. Douglas	Quinte	PC	
Ross, Lillian	Hamilton West / -Ouest	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / adjointe parlementaire du ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W.	Leeds-Grenville	PC	Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Ruprecht, Tony	Parkdale	L	
Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob	Mississauga West / -Ouest	PC	Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (Privatisation)
Saunderson, William	Eglinton	PC	
Sergio, Mario	Yorkview	L	
Shea, Derwyn	High Park-Swansea	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Affaires civiles, de la Culture et des Loisirs
Sheehan, Frank	Lincoln	PC	
Silipo, Tony	Dovercourt	ND	deputy New Democratic Party leader / chef adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Skarica, Toni	Wentworth North / -Nord	PC	
Smith, Bruce	Middlesex	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John	Mississauga North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Spina, Joseph	Brampton North / -Nord	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire du ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W.	Carleton	PC	Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Stewart, R. Gary	Peterborough	PC	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris	Etobicoke West / -Ouest	PC	Speaker / Président
Tascona, Joseph N.	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	PC	
Tilson, David	Dufferin-Peel	PC	
Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H.	Markham	PC	Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David	York Mills	PC	Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement
Vankoughnet, Bill	Frontenac-Addington	PC	
Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble	S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	PC	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones
Wettlaufer, Wayne	Kitchener	PC	
Wildman, Bud	Algoma	ND	New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim	Simcoe West / -Ouest	PC	Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth	Waterloo North / -Nord	PC	Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Wood, Bob	London South / -Sud	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General / adjoint parlementaire du solliciteur général
Wood, Len	Cochrane North / -Nord	ND	
Young, Terence H.	Halton Centre / -Centre	PC	parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Finances
Vacant	Nickel Belt		

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These lists appear in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month. A list arranged by riding appears when space permits.

Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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Monday 5 October 1998

Lundi 5 octobre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 5 October 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 5 octobre 1998

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROPERTY TAX DEADLINE EXTENSION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LE PROLONGEMENT DE DÉLAIS APPLICABLES À L'IMPÔT FONCIER

Mr Young, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 61, An Act to extend the deadlines for appealing property assessments and for giving certain notices relating to taxes and charges on properties with gross leases / *Projet de loi 61, Loi prolongeant les délais prévus pour interjeter appel des évaluations foncières et pour donner certains avis concernant les impôts prélevés et les redevances imposées sur des biens à bail à loyer brut.*

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): Speaker, 1998 has been a year of important and long-overdue changes to the way property is assessed and taxed in Ontario. If passed by the Legislature, this act would recognize that this year taxpayers may need more time to resolve any concerns about new assessments. The act would also respond to the concerns of landlords in gross lease situations to ensure both landlords and tenants pay their fair share of taxes.

If passed, this act will, first of all, extend the deadline for property owners to appeal their assessments to the Assessment Review Board. The new deadline would be October 30, 1998. The deadline for taxpayers to have their assessments reviewed informally through the request for reconsideration process introduced this year is also extended to October 30. If the legislation is passed, any taxpayer who has appealed the 1998 assessment and paid the filing fee will receive a refund where a settlement is reached through the reconsideration process. This will apply only for 1998 assessments.

Second, this legislation will provide relief to those landlords with gross leases who are unaware of or unable to comply with the deadline set in the Small Business and Charities Protection Act passed by this House in June. Under the latter act, landlords with eligible gross leases who want to recover a portion of their 1998 property taxes or business improvement area charges from their tenants were required to notify tenants of this intention in writing

by July 15, 1998; that is, within 30 days after the return of the assessment rolls. Landlords were also required to notify tenants in writing by September 30, 1998, of the actual amount of property taxes and of BIA charges that tenants will be required to pay for the year.

With this bill, the government is responding to the concerns of commercial and industrial property owners in these gross lease situations. If passed, the legislation will give them more time to notify their tenants. This bill will provide that instead of providing two notices — a notice of intent to require payment and a notice requiring payment — landlords with gross leases would have the option for the 1998 tax year of providing tenants with only one notice, one that requires payment. The deadline by which landlords with gross leases must provide tenants with a notice requiring payment of property taxes or BIA charges for the 1998 taxation year would be extended to October 16, 1998.

When this government took office, it inherited a property tax system which was unfair, inconsistent and out of date. All major reviews of property taxation under governments of all three parties found that the system was broken. The Smith committee in 1967, the Blair commission in 1976, the Hopcroft report and the Goyette report in 1985, the Fair Tax Commission in 1993, the GTA task force in 1995 and the Who Does What panel in 1996 all said the system was broken. As well, virtually every municipal leader in the province has been calling for years for the system to be fixed. But previous governments failed to take on the responsibility of bringing the system up to date.

Our government has now successfully completed the complex and difficult task of reforming Ontario's outdated, unfair property assessment and taxation system. We have provided Ontario with a new system that will ensure taxation is fair and consistent and that puts measures in place to ease the transition. Under this new system, every property in the province will now be assessed as of the same date. For 1998, assessments are based on their current value as of June 30, 1996, and from now on assessments will be kept up to date.

The reforms introduced over the last 18 months will provide Ontario with a system of assessment and taxation that is fair and consistent. Similar properties with similar values in a municipality will now pay similar taxes. Municipalities now have the tools they need to make fair tax policy decisions and implement change in a manageable way.

A new system means tax changes. Under the old system, some taxpayers paid more than their fair share to subsidize those who did not. Under the new system, those who paid more than their fair share will pay less. Those whose taxes were unfairly low will begin to pay more.

In areas of the province where assessments have been kept up to date, such as my own town of Oakville in the region of Halton, tax change will be minimal. In other areas, where assessments were allowed to get outdated, changes will be more significant.

We realized that small business and charities may experience tax changes due to reform. We've responded to these concerns by providing municipalities with legislative tools to enable them to make tax changes fairly. These tools include tax rebates to owners of commercial and industrial properties; rebates for registered charities occupying commercial and industrial properties; a cap on tax increases at 2.5% per year in 1998, 1999 and 2000; graduated tax rates for commercial and industrial properties; and optional property classes.

As well, all municipalities are required to provide low-income senior and low-income disabled home owners with a program to cancel or defer tax increases resulting from reassessment. The key word there is "required."

The province has also put an end to spiralling increases in education taxes. School board spending has been a key factor in driving up property taxes. For example, business education property tax went up 87% in the province from 1985 to 1995.

Education taxes on commercial and industrial properties have now been stabilized. For residential property owners, the province has taken half the cost of education off the property tax, and residential taxpayers across the province will now pay for education as a uniform rate set by the province.

All of this, you will agree, adds up to a great deal of change for residents and business owners of the province to absorb in one year. While the assessments themselves have been out in the public domain since February for most ratepayers, for many people the assessment was not very meaningful until the tax bills came out. Many municipalities did not send out bills until mid-August, leaving property owners little time to appeal assessments or take other actions. This bill will give them the time they may need to review or appeal these assessments.

With this bill, the government recognizes it has been a year of significant and positive change for taxpayers. These provisions will help ratepayers adjust to these changes.

I'd like to share my time with the member for Niagara South, the member for Guelph, the member for Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings, and the member for Chatham-Kent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Further debate?

1840

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I'm pleased to rise and join with my colleagues to speak about Bill 61, the Property Tax Deadline Extension Act.

I always enjoy hearing the honourable member for Halton Centre and what he has to say. He's brought some provocative questions to the floor, and I enjoy his comments. As he said —

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Are you going to be backing Gary Carr for the nomination?

Mr Hudak: I don't know if I'll get involved, but I am involved in the debate on this bill this evening. What this will do will be to extend the deadline for appealing property tax assessments until the end of this month, October 30, 1998. Also, to echo the comments that the member for Halton Centre had to say, this is part of a fundamental reform of the way that government operates in Ontario, with the goal to ensure that better-quality services are delivered at all levels of government.

It has been, I guess, just over three years that I've had the privilege and the honour of representing the people of Niagara South in this esteemed institution. Before that, though, I had some encounters with politics, and of course my mother represented the people in Stevensville as the councillor for ward 4 for nine years. I remember her experiences as well dealing with government at the municipal level, the upper tier, at the region, interactions with the province and the federal government on a host of issues.

One thing I remember her saying she found frustrating, and I've experienced that as well, as I'm sure many other members of this House have, is the degree of intersection, the points of intersection between governments, and how it's often easy for politicians to point the other way, to say: "Well, it's not the province's fault. It's not the federal government's fault. It's the other level of government that actually is getting in your way." That's because in a number of areas you have several levels of government involved, and I think there's nothing more frustrating for the taxpayer. It's a truism, but I'll say it again: There is only one taxpayer. It would be one taxpayer who has to fund all four levels of government.

They want to make sure, because when they take time off from their jobs, whether they're driving a truck or a nurse at the hospital or the guy filling up gas at the gas station, they don't have a great deal of time to try to figure out which level of government to go to and who is accountable. Ultimately, they want to have good-quality service, and they'll be able to see very clearly, very transparently, which level of government is responsible for which types of services.

That's what the intention of the property tax reforms has been, and the exchange of services with municipalities: to make one level of government directly accountable to taxpayers so that they will know who to go to with their policy suggestions, their questions on taxation. They'll know where the policies are formed, to make things better, more accountable, more clear and more responsible in the delivery of goods and services from government to the taxpayer.

I think there are savings to be made too. When you eliminate that intersection of services, the duplication of services, you get a better-quality service at the end of the day. Those are savings that can be returned to the tax-

payer in the form of a tax cut. Something we as a party certainly believe in is cutting taxes for all hard-working Ontarians. There could be even more services at one of the levels of government, or a greater variety of services or opportunities to deliver those services in different ways. I think that makes a great deal of sense to the taxpayer, that you're trying to eliminate this duplication and this dual or tripartite delivery of services. It's not easy, because there are years and years that this has been the case in the province. In fact, I'd say that under previous governments it was getting worse. So the people of Ontario asked the Harris government, through the Common Sense Revolution, to eliminate this kind of duplication of services, to make sure the taxpayers know where to get the particular services from whatever level is needed.

There are a number of things that people could be appealing. For example, as the member for Halton Centre had said, across the province now all properties and structures will be evaluated on the same basis, on the basis of their value. That's going to be updated rather frequently, because we had some very strange circumstances across the province, depending on what year the properties were valued at. In Niagara, for example, they went through an updated valuation in 1996 based on 1992 values. I had many taxpayers coming to my office who, even with the 1992 value, were concerned that it wasn't an accurate representation of the value of their property, that 1992 was an aberration that did not reflect probably the most modern, the most recent, assessment of their properties.

I can only imagine in other parts of the province — I think Toronto is one; I know Hamilton would be another. In Scarborough Centre, was it the 1940s or something like that in your area? The 1940s, so you had some very strange circumstances where houses of similar value would have very different assessments and therefore very different tax rates. I think in the issue of fairness across Ontario it made a great deal of sense to make sure that things are valued on the same year for assessment. But the goal of our legislation is also to ensure that that value is updated on a regular basis. Part of our property tax reform is to ensure that is the case, that the most recent value, the most current value of the property, will be achieved.

If somebody had an issue and felt that the assessor, for example, had made an error in the assessment of that property or it wasn't a true representation of that value, this gives them an opportunity — in fact we're extending the opportunity — for them to lodge an appeal to ensure that the actual value, the assessment value, of their property truly reflects the value of that particular tax roll number.

Furthermore, we're also looking at taking care of the gross lease issue that is part of our property tax reforms, to ensure that landlords who previously were unable to pass on a change in taxes to their tenants will now be able to do so.

This doesn't come out of thin air, as I said. These are problems that have been around for generations. Generations of sittings of this House, many different sessions, had not dealt effectively with this issue. In fact, many

governments had come to the edge, to the precipice of making these changes, but backed away.

There's a series of reviews that all said the property tax system was broken, but not one government had the courage until today to take on these reforms: the Smith committee — certainly not named after the member from London-Middlesex. It was another Smith at that time. Certainly if the member from London-Middlesex had headed a property tax review committee, I would expect that that member would have come up with similar suggestions as the 1967 Smith committee report, and in fact probably very similar to what our government has done today. There was the Blair commission in 1976, the Hopcroft report and the Goyette report, 1985. Of course, the NDP had the Fair Tax Commission recommendations in 1993; there was the GTA task force in 1995. Since 1967, 31 years ago, there have been calls for these changes, changes that we have now made to make sure that assessed values across the province are consistent.

In terms of using tax rates as opposed to mill rates, it's a much more transparent process for taxpayers to understand where their taxes come from, how much is going to the municipality, how much is going to education.

I think we should remind those viewing tonight too that in terms of education taxes, the government has cut them in half for residences across the province, and they've been frozen. So those years and years — I think 14 straight years in Niagara — where the school boards increased property taxes to pay for more funding, not necessarily in the classroom but increases to the boards for 14 years, are over now. There will be no more property tax education increases in Niagara or anywhere else in the province, because boards no longer have the power to tax. I think it's an important change that voters, especially senior citizens but taxpayers across the province, are very much in favour of.

So the province in the last couple of years has made the important changes to address years and years of complex, difficult tasks, to update Ontario's outdated and unfair property tax assessment system.

On the issue of fairness, as I said, they have now until October 30 under this bill. If this bill passes, and I expect it will, it will extend the time frame for people to appeal their assessments until October 30, the end of the month.

1850

The other important change we've made, which we often lose sight of in terms of appeals and assessment appeals, is that now there's an opportunity for the owner of the property to meet with the assessors to try to find a mutually satisfactory outcome for judging the assessment, as opposed to going through the entire appeal process and all that red tape. If they can't come to some sort of accord, then of course they go through the formal appeal mechanism, but that gives an opportunity for the assessors to work with taxpayers out there to ensure that we come to a reasonable accommodation without having to go through the appeal process.

All in all, we've made some difficult but necessary changes to the way governments operate between the

province and the municipalities to ensure that services are delivered in the most responsible and accountable manner. I think "transparent" is an important word here, so that taxpayers will know who delivers that service and who is responsible for it, to ensure that it's delivered in the best way: the highest-quality services at the lowest cost possible to the taxpayer.

Also, this government has had the courage — I will stress that and say it one more time — the courage to address long-standing issues that previous governments, of all stripes, frankly, but in recent times the call has been even stronger — the courage to address these changes that were long overdue.

For those properties where the assessment is not in line with what the taxpayer feels is an appropriate assessment for their property, now they will have an extended time period, until October 30. As we had promised in the summertime, we're extending that time frame to the end of this month to enable taxpayers a fair opportunity to get their appeals in, to make sure their property does finally reflect a current value, as close as possible to what it would be in the year 1998.

I have some colleagues who want to express their thoughts on this bill. While I've held my colleagues here in rapt attention the last few minutes of my speech, I know there are many other colleagues who have additional thoughts on the importance of Bill 61 and extending the time frame to October 30, another important piece of legislation from the Ministry of Finance. Many people have probably heard about the Ministry of Finance in the past, because the Ministry of Finance has had much success lately in terms of reducing the budget.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): And reducing the tax.

Mr Hudak: My colleague the member for Scarborough Centre says you could probably call them the ministry of tax cuts, because the Ministry of Finance under this government has succeeded in reducing taxes across the province by at least 30% and even more for some lower-middle-class taxpayers, who are finally getting some income tax cuts. People have more money in their pockets to spend, to invest, to make sure that Ontario has one of the lowest — in fact, now the lowest — marginal tax rates across the provinces.

The Ministry of Finance has also had a great deal of success so far in reducing the deficit, which was \$11.4 billion when this government came into office. Now we're ahead of schedule. I think it's down around \$3.9 billion in the most recent accounts, so very far ahead of schedule. The Minister of Finance, the Honourable Ernie Eves, as well as the rest of cabinet and my colleagues here have done an excellent job in fighting that deficit, making good on our commitment to balance the budget by the year 2000-01, as promised.

We won't waver from that task. We are committed to keeping our promises, as we have. We've cut the taxes. We're ahead of schedule in balancing the budget. We've protected, in fact we've increased, health care funding across the province.

As I said, we've shown the courage and the resolve to address long-standing issues that other governments did not have the courage to approach so that we have a fair assessment system across the province. To participate in that system now, taxpayers have until October 30. I fully expect Bill 61 to pass through debate in this House to give them that time frame in which to appeal any assessment questions they may have.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): I am pleased this evening to have an opportunity to join the debate with my colleague from Halton Centre and my colleague from Niagara South. The topic we are discussing tonight is taxes. More to the point, we are speaking to a piece of legislation entitled the Property Tax Deadline Extension Act, Bill 61.

I would say to my colleagues in the House that I think the word that best summarizes why this bill is being introduced is that this government has been listening. We've been very careful to pay attention to the requests of people across this province. We were instrumental in introducing tax reform — long-overdue tax reform — in this province. It was a very major undertaking, and obviously fine-tuning was required.

This bill addresses a key issue that many of our viewers may be concerned about; that is, if they are concerned about their tax assessment, are they still eligible for appeal? This bill allows the extension of the appeal time to the end of October. It allows them to make an appeal to the Assessment Review Board or to call their local assessment office to come in and review the property. If a filing fee has been paid for reassessment in 1998, this bill will allow a refund to be given to taxpayers if a settlement is reached through reconsideration. Of course, as my colleagues mentioned, this bill will also allow landlords who have gross leases to inform their tenants of changes in their rent, and that deadline is extended to October 16.

Through the Ontario fair assessment legislation that we have brought in during this past year, we have for the first time in this province introduced fairness, as fairly as we can manage it. Commercial and residential property owners have paid differing taxes in their various communities, not just based on usage but based on a system that was designed essentially to create unfairness. Depending on where you lived, where your home was, not just on its value or its maintenance or its use, you would be paying different levels of taxation within your own community, and of course this was extended to a far greater degree all across the province. The new legislation we've introduced and the amendments being proposed through this legislation tonight, Bill 61, provide fairness for the first time.

We all come to this House with different pieces of history in our backgrounds. My father, when he left the farm, became a tax assessor. I don't know how many people would know, but at least once that I personally know of assessors from all across this province were called to the city of Toronto, spent several weeks here in hotels in the evenings, away from their families, so that the entire city of Toronto could be reassessed. It was a good idea to have that all redone. It was fair and the attempt was to bring it

up to a timely assessment. But we know that what happened was that the more current assessment was never adopted by the municipal council, and that occurred time and time again. So we ended up with systems of taxation based on assessments that were badly out of date and hence extremely unfair.

We also had a system that gave very little flexibility to the local municipalities other than to simply not adopt a new reassessment. The new legislation we've introduced that is now making its way through our province does give to our local municipalities much greater flexibility in how to tax based on assessment.

What is that assessment based on? What are our properties being assessed upon? It's based on current value. This means the price that a willing seller could expect to receive from a willing buyer in an arm's-length transaction. It's a very fair system. It addresses currency. Our properties have now all been reassessed to one point. In two years that will be redone. The next common assessment point will be on June 30, 1999, and following that, in sections of three years. In addition, we'll be incorporating not just a regular periodic reassessment but in fact a rolling assessment so that property values continue to be maintained in as fair a way as possible.

What's the old saying? The only two certain things in life are taxes and death. I think Ontarians feel very comfortable about paying their fair share of taxes. They know that taxes that go to the treasuries, whether it's the municipality's treasury or the province or the federal government, are intended for the best and wisest use of common needs among all our citizens. Good-thinking constituents and citizens are very happy to pay their fair share, because they know that's part and parcel of what helps make their communities function well, whether it comes out in garbage collection or their fire or police departments or their public libraries. The key is that they expect it to be fair. That's what was missing from the old system, which we have finally rejected for this newer system. It speaks to currency; it speaks to the fairness of properties exchanged by willing buyers and willing sellers.

1900

It has always been very easy for municipalities to reject change. It's difficult to undertake major change, especially this kind of change, when you're looking at changes to almost every property all across the province. I would like to say to our assessors in the finance department, who were under a lot of pressure to reassess properties across this province, that they have done a fine job. The member for Halton Centre mentioned that his municipality was relatively current. So was that of my jurisdiction of Guelph and Wellington county, so the restructuring and the changes were relatively minimal. There have been a few glitches that needed to be addressed, but generally, when they have phoned to ask questions about their assessment or about their taxation, people have agreed that it was fair and the right thing to do.

It was very important that our government considered that there would be varying needs based on the fact that

assessments in some jurisdictions were over 40 years old, so we allowed municipalities at least eight options of different classes, caps — a number of alternatives they could implement in their local jurisdiction to help ease any transition difficulties that would occur. I think that is key. We are practising what we preach in that we have been giving our local municipalities the ability to make decisions based on local needs and local circumstances. Most of us have been very pleased to see some of our jurisdictions undertake those needed changes. There are some jurisdictions where clearly we would like them to revisit some of the decisions that have been made because the effects maybe weren't exactly as expected.

I am very pleased to be a member of the government that has undertaken a change that has been requested. My colleague from Niagara South mentioned various reports that have been submitted over the years during the reign of various governments, all indicating a need for revamping the entire taxation system. It has been long overdue. As I said, people are more than happy to pay their fair share, but they want it to be fair. In our jurisdiction and, from what I hear, across the province, there is general agreement that the removal of 50% of the education tax from the property base was a good thing. In fact, if I have received criticism, it was that we didn't remove it all. But in restructuring it's wise to do it in stages, and certainly that was the decision we made. I might add, that decision was influenced by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, who gave us suggestions on how they felt we were best to move forward.

I am pleased to have the opportunity this evening to rise in support of Bill 61. It is in response to constituents who may need extra time for assessment, for assessors to be able to process those and for those possible appeals to go before the Assessment Review Board, and for landlords. It's part and parcel of changes that were long overdue. These changes in our taxation system have brought fairness, have brought consistency, have brought flexibility to our municipalities, have made it much more understandable. These changes to our taxation system are part and parcel of all the things this government has been doing to make this province strong, economically viable and very vital to go into our next century.

Mr Gary Fox (Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings): I realize that property tax reform has been talked about for a long time. When this government took office, it inherited a property tax system that was unfair, inconsistent and out of date. All major reviews of property taxation found that the system was broken. If we go back to the Smith committee in 1967, the Blair commission in 1976, the Hopcroft report in 1985, the Fair Tax Commission in 1993, the GTA task force in 1995 and the Who Does What panel in 1996, they all said the old system was broken, but previous governments failed to take on the responsibility of bringing the system up to date.

To read a quote: "The ability to listen and the flexibility to change course when necessary are among the qualities that define a good politician. Ontarians can take some consolation that the provincial treasurer isn't obliv-

ious to their legitimate concerns." On his announcement that he wants to extend the property assessment appeal deadline, "Finance Minister Ernie Eves's offer to extend the deadline for property assessment appeals shows a welcome flexibility." This is a quote from the Hamilton Spectator on September 1, 1998.

I'd like to refer to another quote. Mayor Lastman has said that some people weren't paying their fair share of taxes under the former system. "That means some homeowners are subsidizing others, he said, and 'the subsidies have got to stop.'

"Why the heck should people two blocks away, or in other parts of Toronto, subsidize people who are doing well, and want to keep paying low taxes, lower than what they should?" That's from the Toronto Star, April 2, 1998.

When I was in municipal politics it was a concern back then. The municipality I represented went to full market value assessment back in 1990. This is what is making it so confusing today, because with the restructuring and amalgamation of municipalities and with assessment going to current market value, the change in the assessment is being blamed on restructuring with amalgamation, which is then downloaded on to the provincial government. That's where the unfairness of it is happening at this time. That's why it's important to give this extension, so this assessment can be reviewed and put in place in the near future.

There are some other things I wanted to mention. The Fair Municipal Finance Act introduced in January 1997 allows municipalities to phase in assessment-related tax changes over up to eight years. Previously, municipalities only had a maximum of four years to phase in tax changes following reassessment. The act also eliminated the business opportunity tax. Graduated tax rates for commercial properties were introduced in the Fair Municipal Finance Act which received first reading in June 1997.

Bill 16, the Small Business and Charities Protection Act, introduced in May 1998, enables municipalities to cap property tax increases at 2.5% per year in 1998, 1999 and 2000 for commercial, industrial and multi-residential properties. The act also allows municipalities to provide tax rebates to business properties. Optional property classes allow municipalities to achieve greater tax equity among property classes. Bill 16 also allows municipalities to give graduated rates for industrial purposes. All this that we've put in place in the past has certainly been an achievement to help with the new reassessment and the fair value to everyone.

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Just to give you an example in my own riding, with the amalgamation of the 10 municipalities going to a one-tier government for the whole county of Prince Edward, I had a lady come to me very upset because her property taxes had doubled. I was quite concerned about this when she mentioned it because I happen to know the lady's residence. She has a nice two-storey home in the town, so I asked her what her taxes were and she said, "My taxes are \$900." I looked at the lady and I said, "You tell me your

taxes have doubled?" and she said yes. She was only paying \$450 before. Now this was a lovely two-storey home on a nice lot in a town and I suggested to her that maybe she should keep that to herself because I live in a rural area with homes worth about \$125,000 to \$150,000 and those property taxes range in the neighbourhood of \$2,500 a year. When she understood that, she had a little different attitude on her property taxes because of the fact that she was still getting a break.

That's the fairness of the whole thing today, the fact that we've got to get everyone out there on the same playing field here with our assessments and our property taxes so that we are all paying our own fair share. The idea of removing the education tax has certainly made a plus in this regard to help out in all aspects of business, of residential property with our taxes.

Without any further ado, I thank you for the time and I certainly support this bill.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): I'm pleased to be able to join with my colleagues tonight to make a few comments on Bill 61. Those of us who were at AMO will remember that it was at that venue that the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Ernie Eves, made the offer to extend the deadline for assessments if that legislation could be introduced into the House and be accepted by all parties, and I'm sure we will see that happen as the evening goes on, that all the parties will support this because it does bring some additional fairness to the taxpayers of the province.

What we've moved to with our new assessment system is fairer because all of us know that over the years we have had quite a discrepancy between what various pieces of property were assessed at because of the timing during which they were assessed. This is a problem that's been outstanding, as we've had comments on, going back into the 1940s and the 1950s. It's been a difficult problem for any government to deal with. The member from Niagara made reference to the fact that we showed a lot of courage in saying this was an issue we had to deal with, and we did deal with it by introducing the fair assessment act. That fair assessment, when all the properties in the province are assessed, will lead to some situations where some appeals might be warranted. Those appeals now will have an opportunity to be heard up to and including the end of October, should this legislation pass.

As we move to a fairer system, it's all part of our overall impetus to reduce the total tax burden for the people of Ontario, as well as make it fairer. We've proven that taxes are job killers. We've proven that they take away from economic initiative in our province. We have moved as a government to reduce taxes and to make them fairer. This is but one small piece of that.

We gave municipalities lots of tools to use to help in the course of changing this system because we knew it would be a difficult situation. If you have a piece of property that has been grossly undervalued for many, many years, to all of a sudden have to pay the taxes that that piece of property should have been paying all along, to have that impact happen in one year, would be difficult for

many people, so we gave municipalities many tools to use. We told them they could have phase-ins of up to eight years. We told them they could give relief to seniors so that seniors wouldn't be negatively impacted. We told them they could use graduated tax rates for commercial properties. We told them they could use such things as rebates, optional property classes. We gave them many, many tools to use so that they could mitigate the effects of changes in assessment, changes that made the assessment fairer, but we gave them those tools to mitigate the effect on individual people. Not all the assessments were too high. Some of them were too low, so the ones that were too low had to come up. Those that were too high had to come down. You create a situation of winners and losers.

In my municipality of Chatham-Kent we've done some things to help the taxpayer. They have not been easy things to do, but instead of using this particular opportunity to blame the provincial government for bringing about a fairer tax system, my municipality of Chatham-Kent agreed to phase in all the changes over three years. I was surprised to learn that very, very few municipalities in Ontario took advantage of any of the tools that were afforded to them to mitigate the effects of property tax changes on their constituents. I don't understand why they would not have used them, other than the fact it made the process a little bit more complicated, but it's questionable whether or not they had the best interests of their constituents at heart when they ignored the tools that were given to them to make this process go smoother.

I would also like to talk in terms of the other part of the equation when it comes to property tax. There is assessment. There's also the tax rate. I, for one person, believe that property taxes are too high. I believe we have too much local government and that local government tends to be very expensive.

To give you an example of what can be accomplished, I'd like to briefly remind the House about some changes that we've made in Chatham-Kent, where as a result of making some very difficult decisions, but decisions that were taken in the best interests of our taxpayers, we moved from a constituency that had 23 municipalities with 156 elected representatives to a constituency that has one municipality with 18 elected representatives. That was a very difficult process we went through, but we are only 110,000 people and it didn't make a lot of sense that the 110,000 people in the Chatham and Kent county area required 156 elected representatives to provide them with local government when the 11 million people in Ontario only required 103 to represent them at the federal level of government. Our people set about changing that situation.

Now we've moved to a situation where the new municipality of Chatham-Kent, which by the way, for your information, is the second-largest geographical municipality in the whole province of Ontario, has a much more efficient system of single-tier government. As a result of that, while other municipalities have announced 15%, 16%, 10% and 5% property tax increases this year, our municipality, because of a more efficient system of government, was able to announce no tax increases overall.

That doesn't mean that as a result of assessment changes there weren't some ups and downs and some winners and losers, but overall the municipality of Chatham-Kent announced no tax increases. That's the result of the fact that our amalgamation has produced in excess of \$5 million worth of identifiable savings this year and \$11 million or \$12 million worth of identifiable savings next year. Based on an overall budget of 170-some-million bucks, that \$11 million is a pretty sizable percentage that we have found in expense reduction as a result of coming to grips with too much local government.

In addition to our local government, we've also put together four police forces and a rural OPP force into a single police force, headed up by our new chief of police Chief John Kopinak from the Port Colborne area, a wonderful addition to our community. That amalgamation of our police forces has saved \$750,000 annually and in addition to that has provided us with an enhanced level of service that is already being commented on by the smaller municipalities it serves. So not only have we saved the taxpayers some money in Chatham-Kent, we are also providing an increased level of service.

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In addition to that, as part of our restructuring we took 11 public utilities commissions and they became amalgamated into one, which is now just a committee of council. We've abolished that structure of 11 PUCs that only served 80,000 or 90,000 people and have gone to one single system, and it's a committee of council. It was just announced in our newspaper last week that that particular move will save \$3 million to \$4 million per year on behalf of the users of hydro and will result in a substantial rate decrease next year for the users of hydro in the community of Chatham-Kent.

In addition to that, we had a tragic wind storm that struck parts of our municipality a couple of months ago. The tremendous comments we heard were that as a result of the amalgamation of all our PUCs, we were able to provide much better service restarting electricity and cleaning up after the storm.

Those opportunities for municipal politicians to make some tough decisions that benefit their constituents exist all across this province. The same opportunities existed in Toronto. Toronto took advantage of them, and now we read comments that "The greater Toronto area is on its way to being one of the richest, most populous and fastest-growing areas on the continent," says the Toronto Board of Trade."

There is much that can be done to improve the tax burden that we place on our constituents, and as elected representatives I think we have an obligation to do that.

As we look across the province at the net result of the changes the finance minister has brought in regarding taxes, not only the fair assessment and the changes that Bill 61 brings about that allow for more time but the other changes we've brought in — reducing income tax, reducing the employer health tax for employers, reducing corporate income tax — when you look around and see the effects of that, the proof is very obvious that reducing

taxes stimulates growth, the stimulation of that growth produces more jobs, those new jobs generate more income, that income generates more income tax, and that just keeps reinforcing the ability of the province to reduce taxes.

Look at youth employment. We know that in the month of August it rose by 3,900. That's after a gain of almost 16,000 in the month of July. That's just in youth employment. We know that the unemployment rate in Ontario stands at 7.2%. That's lower than the national average of 8.3%. We know that the help wanted index in the month of August stood at 2%, the highest level it's been at since 1990. We know that consumers continue to spend in Ontario; retail sales were up 9.3% over the first six months of 1998. In the business sector, international merchandise exports from Ontario rose 7.9%.

There are many, many indications that the province's direction of reducing the tax burden, making it fairer for the constituents we serve, is the right track and that it is the way to make Ontario once again the tremendous driving force for the country of Canada that it has been traditionally.

In summary, Bill 61 represents a flexibility demonstrated by the finance minister to ease the burden a little bit on the difficult transition we're making to a fairer property tax system. I know we can count on our opposition members to support Bill 61 as it moves through the House. Hopefully, it can become law and we can move on to some more important issues that we need to deal with in this House.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to make some comments this evening.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Bradley: I want to compliment the government on accepting the Liberal suggestion which was made in committee three times, I think, in the form of a motion that you extend the time for appealing property taxes. It was turned down by the government members each time. Each time we proposed it in committee, the government turned it down. Then Mr Ernie Eves showed up at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario convention, and he and Mike Harris hadn't spoken to one another. Ernie said, "We're going to extend it, we think." Mike said, "Oh, we don't have to extend that deadline." Then it goes back to Ernie, then back to Mike. Finally, bowing to the pressure of the opposition right across this province, you complied and we're going to extend it. That's fine.

I can tell you, the people who operate the Ukrainian Black Sea Hall in St Catharines have been hit with a huge assessment increase that is going to be very difficult for them. Non-profit organizations across our community are facing the same problem, small businesses are being hit with these increases as a result of previous bills by this government, and of course homeowners across our municipalities are facing the same thing.

Mixed into this is the fact that you've short-changed the Niagara region by \$18 million. Your definition over there of the downloading having no effect is to stick the region with \$18 million more in taxes. Even the former Conservative member of Parliament for St Catharines-

Brock, Peter Partington, said it was the province that was to blame for this — the downloading. You know something? I agree with Peter tonight.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): It's been almost amusing to listen to the members of the government opposite. If this wasn't such a serious issue, we'd be laughing our way all through this evening. Five or six members from the government side spoke and you would think they had come forward with something they dreamt up themselves that was going to improve the tax system once and for all. It was like, "This is it." Of course they forgot to mention that this is the sixth time they've brought forward legislation on the property tax system, but more than that, that this is the sixth bill they've brought in to try to fix the problems created by the previous five.

One member I know went on about Bill 16 and the virtues of all that, forgetting to mention that the capping of the 2.5% was brought in after incredible pressure on the business community. Even this government had to realize that had they proceeded with their tax scheme the way they had set it up, many small businesses were going to go under. You know what? We're still in that situation, because many businesses are still faced with incredible increases in municipalities that have not chosen to apply that 2.5% cap.

Had the government listened to us when the last bill was in front of the House and the bill before that, when we suggested to them that various things, including their crazy deadlines and timelines for appeal, wouldn't work, we wouldn't be here tonight. We wouldn't have to deal with this bill. We're glad the government finally has come forward and admitted that they screwed up once again and that they're prepared to extend the timelines. If I have a chance to talk later, I'll expand on why I think they are going to cause a problem to continue, particularly on the business side, even with this bill. We'll have a chance to talk a bit about that later on. But let there be no mistake about it, they have messed this up and we're finally getting on our way to fixing it a little bit.

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Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): There has been so much chaos in this government's property tax non-reform that I'm losing track of just how many bills they've actually brought into the House to fix the property tax problems, the mess they've created.

Mr Bradley: Six.

Mrs McLeod: My House leader says it's six. I lost count after number four, which extended the deadline for appeals by a month. I guess the government hoped that maybe one month was going to be sufficient time to fix the problems they have created, but they have now had to recognize, as our finance critic, Gerry Phillips, has been saying from the very beginning, that this mess was far too great to be fixed in a matter of one month. So now we have the fifth bill, or maybe it is the sixth bill, as my House leader says, which attempts again to provide some period of appeal to try and fix the absolute mess that the Harris government has made out of property taxation.

As I came into the House this evening, I heard the member for Huron, I believe it was, suggesting — perhaps it was another member; I'll take it back. But one of the members on the opposite side of the House was saying that people would see a fairness to this.

To talk to the residential taxpayers in my community, if their tax bill actually went down, they're prepared to see a certain fairness in it. But the senior who is living in a tiny house in the east end of my community, a tiny house with no basement at all, and who just got a tax bill that says her assessment is \$90,000 is having trouble seeing where the fairness in this actually is.

But really, the major problem is for the businesses in my community at this point. This government tried to tell them that they were going to have a tax decrease. After all, they were taking education off the property tax. But the government forgot to remind the businesses on a regular basis that they were only taking education off the residential property tax and only 50% of it off the residential property tax base. So imagine the feeling of the businesses when they suddenly see their tax bills increase by reassessment and by having all the provincial down-loading and having to still pay education tax.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Je me souviens très bien. I remember so vividly, as if it were this morning, when our deputy leader, our finance critic, the member for Dovercourt, warned the government of the day, "You're going about it the wrong way, in a direction we don't subscribe to, and you're certainly going too quickly."

So here we are, October 5, looking at a deadline of October 30. It could have been avoided. They could have saved themselves the embarrassment, but more importantly, they could have saved the taxpayers of Ontario, the property owners, the small business entrepreneurs, a lot of anxiety and some fear. Simply put, in street parlance, they screwed up big time.

One would have expected more of a government that prides itself on knowing the marketplace, on making people feel good. A few minutes ago the member for Chatham-Kent gave credit for any and all job creation in Ontario to the Harris regime. When the jobs, unfortunately, start disappearing, then he'll blame Asia. He'll blame Singapore. He'll blame the Korean market. He'll blame the John Meriwethers of this world, at Long-Term Capital — their friends.

This could have been avoided. They insisted on going to current value assessment. Let them carry the guilt, not the taxpayer. They were told and told again that they were going about it the wrong way and that when the rubber hit the road it wouldn't work. But of course not. They wore blinkers and kept on in their ill-fated diligence. They're going to sock it to people. It won't work.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Chatham-Kent has two minutes to respond.

Mr Carroll: I appreciate the comments from the member for St Catharines, the member for Fort William, the member for Dovercourt and the member for Lake Nipigon.

It's interesting. The member for Lake Nipigon can always be counted on to regale us with his reflections. He

made a comment that on behalf of my government I take credit for all the jobs that have been created in the province of Ontario. Well, we won't take credit for all of them but we'll take credit for most of them. We will, however, blame the members of the third party for the 10,000 jobs that they lost in the province during the five years that they were in power. We will at least be consistent and take credit and give blame.

It's nice to hear that the opposition parties are both taking credit for having advanced this suggestion that we extend the date. It begs the question — if they are taking credit for it, they obviously are in agreement with it — why we can't just get on with it and go on to the next piece of legislation, but we do need to have a little opportunity to put our cases forward, which happened tonight.

The bottom line is that we will continue as a government to move forward in the name of the taxpayers of the province to give them a tax system that is fairer, that is less burdensome, so they can afford to enjoy the success being generated in the province as we move forward and make Ontario once again the driving force behind this great country of Canada.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I would ask unanimous consent to defer the leadoff for the official opposition, in which case I would speak as a regular speaker in rotation for 20 minutes.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Crozier: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you, colleagues.

I want to take this opportunity tonight, of course, as others have, to speak to Bill 61. It was just said by the member for Chatham-Kent that if it was our suggestion — and in fact it was; Gerry Phillips, our finance critic, over the past number of months has been suggesting that the taxpayers of Ontario needed more opportunity to appeal their taxes than was being given to them because of the mess our property tax system was in — we shouldn't even be debating this tonight.

That goes along with the normal course of events that this government likes to have; that is, that you don't have the opportunity to debate and you don't have the opportunity to bring the thoughts of your constituents to this House. In fact, this afternoon we dealt with a time allocation bill on another subject. It's just further evidence that those of us who are elected representatives to this Legislature — and the government members should feel the same — should be given the opportunity to debate issues, to bring those issues into the Legislature and to comment on the feelings of their constituents.

So we are taking a limited amount of time to debate this particular bill. The taxpayers of the province should know that, yes, we support a bill that will extend the length of time. We are concerned that the announcement was made back in August by the Minister of Finance, but here we are, almost two months later, debating the bill that's going to extend the time. One would question whether there shouldn't be even additional time to bring in the objections

that many of our taxpayers have to the tax bills they've received so far.

Members from the government, five or six of them, have been explaining all the great things about property tax assessment revision in the province of Ontario. It has been almost a year, if not more, since the first bill was brought in that was going to solve everything. What the members haven't explained is that the real reason we're here tonight debating this bill is that the government has totally mismanaged any property tax revision that they had intended right from the very beginning.

We've had six property tax bills, each trying to improve on the other, trying to amend and correct something missed in the bill before it. The result is that the property taxpayers of the province do need more time to appeal, and rightly so.

It was also mentioned by one of the government members that very few municipalities have used the tools that were given to them in order to take ideal property tax revision and make it more palatable. I suggest that one of the reasons they didn't perhaps take the opportunity to use those tools is because they were so darned confused with the issue that they didn't know what tools were to be used to solve what problem. They simply didn't understand, because they were going through six different bills and they had lost track of what it was they were able to do.

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In fact, that same member suggested that the municipalities that didn't use these tools might not be acting in the best interests of their municipalities. I thought the government members were standing up tonight to smooth these rough waters, were standing up to explain to the people of Ontario why we're past three quarters of the way through a year and the property owners still don't know what they're going to pay. Yet it's suggested by one of the government members that the municipalities just don't act in the best interests of their taxpayers.

I would take objection to that if I were a municipal representative. In the eight years I was on council, five of those years as mayor, in the town of Leamington I can't recall that we had any specific problem with our tax assessment. We went through reassessment and were able to explain to our property owners the reasons for that. We called it market value assessment at that time; I think now it's being called actual value assessment. I don't know, it has been given several names. It all means the same thing, that the market sets the assessment. To think that the elected municipal representatives aren't acting in the best interests of their taxpayers paints with a pretty wide brush a lot of qualified, interested, concerned municipal representatives in our province. I'm sorry that on an evening when we're trying to make things better someone should suggest they haven't taken this interest.

It was also mentioned that we've had too much local government in the past and it has been very expensive. I've always maintained, prior to becoming a municipal elected representative and since I've become elected to the provincial Legislature, that on the whole municipal governments have acted much more fiscally responsibly

than most, if not all, provincial governments, certainly the ones within recent memory. I think municipalities have acted much more fiscally responsibly than both levels of senior government. To say that they were very expensive, I don't know where the member gets that idea. The fact that some municipal councillors have served for years in the province for a stipend, maybe that's where the "very expensive" comes in. But overall, the way they've conducted themselves, the way they've handled their fiscal responsibilities, I am one to give credit to any municipal representative who has served their municipality over any number of years.

As a matter of fact, when we think about the amalgamations that are going to be taking place, that are taking place, that have taken place in Ontario, we're going to lose a number of very good municipal representatives because there simply will be fewer of them. But that's no reason to attack them for not having had the best interests of their taxpayers at heart.

This evening, in addition to the six property tax bills that we've had to deal with since the winter of 1997, we have another bill. It's called Bill 61, An Act to extend the deadlines for appealing property assessments and for giving certain notices relating to taxes and charges on properties with gross leases. I suggest that even after tonight there will be a number of taxpayers in the province who will still be confused as to what the real objective of this government is when it comes to property taxes, and that it's not to simply confuse them, because this bill tonight, as we have heard and we will hear again no doubt, is to extend the deadline for appeals. It also covers those sections that allow landlords to require tenants with certain existing gross leases to pay parts of the taxes or business improvement charges.

We go back to the reason the government did this. Yes, I was at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario convention when the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Ernie Eves, announced that there was going to be an extension to this deadline, and yes, I did hear or see the reports of where the Premier didn't think there was any reason to extend the deadline, another indication of the left hand not talking to the right hand. I suggest to you that's the reason we have had to have all of these tax bill revisions, all of the six bills that have come before the House, because for some reason or other the left hand hasn't talked to the right hand, and what it results in, in my view at least, is total mismanagement.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): We didn't ask Guy Giorno yet.

Mr Crozier: Didn't ask Guy Giorno. I think that's probably a good suggestion. It comes from a backbencher of the government side, and you should know much better than I, so I believe that.

I think part of what we should do tonight, and we should use this time fairly usefully, is to at least let those who are watching know that this bill will pass, that their time will be extended. What they can do is ask for a reconsideration of their tax bill through the assessment office, and then, upon filing their fee for their appeal, if

that reduction in assessment is granted, they'll get their money back. I think that's a very gratuitous move on behalf of the government, because there are a number of user fees, this not being the least of them, that the government has instituted, but they're willing to give it back if they're wrong, and not so much that the government is wrong but to give it back if the assessment is found to be inaccurate.

I think somewhere in the figures it was said that there were some three million households or businesses or properties in Ontario that have been reassessed in the last year. I have had a number of constituents say to me: "How do they go about reassessing these properties when they didn't even come into my house? Nobody visited. Nobody came in to see my house." I'll use my own as an example. How do they know that something hasn't changed in my house that would cause the assessment to either go up or go down? How do they know I haven't taken the back room off the house or torn down a garage? They'd know in my case because I always get a building permit for that, but not everybody even knows they have to get a building permit to do those things or a permit to take a building down. I think that's a legitimate question, because I've talked to the assessment department and I've talked to assessors, and they're willing to explain to us what their responsibility is and how difficult it is to carry out.

I suggest that what the government has done is that in the period of a year or even less they have rushed this through. They have rushed these assessments through, and gosh, no wonder there are appeals, because there are tens of thousands of taxpayers out there who say, "There's no possible way this assessment can be correct if someone doesn't come into my house or my business property and really find out what's been done, what hasn't been done, what's been improved, what's been changed, and therefore what it should really cost." When somebody says to the assessor, "Someone down the street has a house that looks like mine and they're paying less property tax because they're assessed for less; I wonder why mine shouldn't be less," I think that's a valid question.

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One of the things we haven't discussed at any great length is the difficulty the assessment department has had, and the employees of the assessment department, in making these changes, the handicap they have been working under because they just didn't have enough time. That's what we're talking about tonight: people not having enough time. I think all along there has been criticism of what this means. The government has had warning after warning about what this means. I simply go back to the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers. Need we be reminded that when they were talking about an earlier property tax bill they said: "This bill is complicated, cumbersome, confusing and too often badly drafted. The end product is a political and administrative nightmare?" That's what we've been left with here. These aren't my words; they're the words of an association that rarely speaks out. In fact, it may be a precedent that they spoke out like this. They're non-partisan, they're employees who

are hired to do the will of the elected municipal councils and their citizens, and they are taking this unprecedented move in saying: "The end product is a political and administrative nightmare. The only way to make up for that loss" — they're referring to the loss in some of the areas — "is to shift some of the tax burden on to residential property taxpayers or cut budgets."

They have said that this government simply can't take this idea and walk out and say it's a done deal. You have to give these things time to work themselves through, and therefore we're standing here tonight debating that very thing: time. We just don't have enough time. I suggest to the government members that you have a task to get up and make this sound like you're doing a good thing, but you have to tell folks the truth, that the reason you're doing it is you messed up the whole issue to begin with. I agree, we probably have more — no, we don't have more important things to debate, because this is very important. We have other things to debate, and when you could have eliminated some of this, when we didn't have to be here in the first place, you're right, we wouldn't have to be wasting valuable time.

I want to assure the property taxpayers in this province that this bill will pass. They will have more opportunity, a longer period of time, to appeal their taxes. I've been paying property taxes since 1969. I can never recall a time when tax bills came out so late, when appeals were allowed so late, all in the name of making things better, and for the life of me, I can't understand how this has made anything any better for anybody.

I brought a tax bill tonight that I was going to discuss, but the fact is that I have just brought one out of many I have received. You can understand some of the frustration that's out there if I use this as an example. This is a business in the town of Amherstburg. Their 1997 property tax was about \$3,800, their business tax was about \$1,138, for a total of \$4,934. Their 1998 tax bill is \$6,480. This is small business tax. These are small businesses that were supposed to be helped by this government, but I suggest that if it's any example of the many I've received and my colleagues have received, and I assume members on the other side of the House have received, it's going to kill a lot of small businesses. I don't know whether the idea is to put caps on it, because we'll hear from somebody else then that all the cap on one does is make the other one pay tax for a longer period of time.

There has been a sham, which I may get an opportunity to speak to later, on the elderly and the disabled, who are being told, "You can be helped by our new tax scheme by deferring your taxes." I hope they understand that what that means is they're going to get an opportunity to delay their tax but they're going to be paying interest on it in the meantime.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Silipo: I'm happy to comment on the statements made by the member for Essex South. I remember sitting in committee with him on a number of those previous bills. We pointed out to the government, as he will recall as he

was part of that as well, that what the government was doing was going to cause these very same problems. Now we are here tonight dealing with the sixth in a succession of bills to amend the property tax system to set up this new tax system that Mike Harris has wanted to implement that in fact is nothing but the admission of this government that they once again messed up the situation and they're having to bring in another piece of legislation to extend the timeline for appeals, in this case to October 30.

Will this solve the problem? It will temporarily give a bit of a sigh of relief to some people who want and need to appeal their assessments because of the mistakes that have been made, mistakes that quite frankly came about because of the rush this government was in to implement the scheme.

The member for Essex South talked about his previous experience with the implementation of market value assessment. He will probably recall that at that time, as bad as that system was and still is in our view, at least it was done with some sense of timing, that is, there was some actual review of the properties and the values established. In this case, what the Harris government has done is try to condense a three-year process into a one-year process, and that rush is at the heart of many of the problems that we now are having to deal with, with piece after piece of amending legislation trying to fix problems created by the previous pieces of legislation. I don't know that we're going to have the end of it here whenever we pass his bill, whether it's tonight or tomorrow or tomorrow night, because the problems that the Mike Harris government has caused in the tax scheme are going to continue to be evident big time.

Mr Carroll: I was interested in the comments of the member for Essex South as he mused that maybe we should add some additional time, that instead of the end of October maybe add some additional time. I thought to myself: "What a typically Liberal comment to make: 'Let's delay it, let's study it, let's never make a decision. Let's just keep stretching it out and stretching it out until we create more and more problems.'" It was such a typically Liberal comment, I had to make reference to it.

He also talked about being a member of municipal government and that municipal governments were always the most fiscally responsible of all levels of government. That may be true, but when you compare any municipal government to the 10 years of provincial government between 1985 and 1995, what we call the 10 lost years, when taxes were raised 65 times to a level that was the highest in North America and when \$100 billion worth of debt was rung up, and when you compare it to the federal government that has accumulated \$600 billion worth of debt and has taxes higher than most jurisdictions in North America, then to say that the municipal government was more frugal than that is really not saying a lot.

The comments are that all levels of government in Ontario have not served the taxpayer well. This particular government is trying to do something about it and so are some municipalities. I tip my hat to all those who are trying to help.

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Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): In the last two or three weeks in my county of Renfrew, including the city of Pembroke, the early fall sky has been lit with one protest about taxes after another. In communities like the city of Pembroke, the town of Arnprior, the town of Deep River, the newly created town of Petawawa, to name four or five, people, particularly small business people, are enraged at what's happened to their local assessments and their local taxes.

The irony for a lot of these people is that the Mike Harris Conservative government has been the government to give them the biggest tax increases their small businesses have ever seen. There's no one else to blame, because when the people met at Petawawa the other day and looked at their situation, they found that it was provincial decisions taken here at Queen's Park that have caused the real pain that's been driving the tax bills in Petawawa upwards, in many cases by a factor of 50%, 75% and, in some cases, 100%.

The interesting thing is that when a lot of small businesses in Renfrew county look at their tax bills, they are stunned and angry to find out that the single biggest cause for the increase is the new, provincially imposed education tax. The Mike Harris education levy for industrial and commercial purposes in Renfrew county appears to be substantially higher than the tax rate it replaced.

We've got other aspects of provincial policy, particularly the one concerning reapportionment, where it is very clear that this Harris government acceded to some very well-oiled, very well-financed lobbying a year or so ago that had the effect of shifting a substantial amount of the tax burden in cities like Pembroke — and I think of places like the Pembroke Mall — away from big business on to the backs of small, medium-sized, family-owned business. Some revolution.

Mr Pouliot: Simply put, the Conservatives have thrown the property tax system in Ontario into utter chaos, nothing short of that. Figure this: With respect, three million units being assessed and reassessed, the largest undertaking of this nature ever in North America, and to do it in record time, in a year to 15 months. You had a proliferation of assessors, mostly amateur, going door to door assessing, some of them from the phone book, others from the local bar, with small business people, residents threatening to shoot them on sight, 12-year-old kids now about to get a gun not letting them on their property. This is chaos.

We're in October. Their fiscal year started on January 1 and yet this subject matter has not been resolved. What are people to do? How long will it take those 600,000 appeals to be heard? I will be long into retirement before they get to the first 20%. This is chaotic.

Sadly, it need not have happened. It could have been prevented. An ounce of common sense would have prevented it. If you were intent on current value, market value, fair assessment, Speaker — and I know you're not in favour, Mr Speaker, that you dreaded this process and

predicted the chaos that today we are here debating, a sad day for Ontarians, for taxpayers.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Response, the member for Essex South.

Mr Crozier: I want to thank the members from Dovercourt, Renfrew North and Lake Nipigon for their comments; and who in here would be surprised that I'm not particularly enamoured by the comments from the member for Chatham-Kent, least of all the member for Chatham-Kent? I gave him an opportunity, after he had slammed municipal councils for being expensive, to kind of make up for that. And what does he do? He stands there and says, "Maybe so." Member for Chatham-Kent, I don't say, "Maybe so"; I think they've been darned efficient.

Then he went on to bring up the matter of provincial debt. That then leads me to remind people that when this government took office the provincial debt was roughly \$100 billion. What's going to happen in the five years that they've been in office, according to their own budget figures? They're going to borrow \$20 billion more. They're going to raise the provincial debt from \$100 billion to \$120 billion, the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario.

If you add that to the debt that was run up by Progressive Conservative provincial governments before, the PCs — this government, the tax fighters, those who want to keep government spending down — are going to be responsible for \$65 billion out of the \$120 billion of debt this province will have, more than half of it. I'm glad you gave me that opportunity.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Silipo: I'm glad to have a chance to start off debate for our caucus on this. We have indicated to the government, particularly to the House leader for the government side, both orally and in writing that we will support this legislation. I just want to reiterate that. We also indicated that we would support fast passage of this legislation. We even indicated that we were prepared to have it passed in one sitting. We're still prepared to have that happen, although we understand that we probably will have a couple of days on this. That's fine.

The point is that we were surprised when the attitude that came from the government side was, "We're prepared to bring in this legislation if the opposition parties are prepared to support it." Well, we were the ones who were calling for it. Back when the previous pieces of legislation were being debated, we had amendments; we had debate about the fact that, among other things, these deadlines were going to cause problems. Over this past summer, as we began to see more clearly the impact of the deadlines themselves on the appeals, we began calling on the minister to announce, first of all, that they were prepared to relax the deadlines and then to announce that they would bring in legislation to make that effective.

We stand here tonight very consistent in the approach we have taken and eager to see this legislation pass, even though I believe it still contains some problems in terms of one of the deadlines particularly related to the business occupancy tax issue, and I will talk about that in a second.

But I also want to indicate that in the spirit of wanting to get this legislation passed sooner rather than later, I will be dividing my time this evening with my colleagues from Lake Nipigon and London Centre. I just wanted to let you know that, Speaker.

To get into some of the background that has led us to this point, the government began its misadventure with the whole property tax system some time ago when it began the whole exercise of Who Does What. At that point they were eager to sort out and were trumpeting the fact that they were going to take education costs off the property tax in exchange for social services and some other costs. Then as they got into it, they of course realized that it was one thing to say that you were going to do that; it was quite another to actually sort out the problem that was there, something that has been there for years as a problem, certainly going back to previous Conservative governments.

The long and the short of it came down to the fact that at the end of the day, the Harris government decided that they were not going to take education off the property tax — they were going to remove some of the costs of that — but they were now going to control the establishment of the tax rate for education purposes. Of course, in exchange for that there were also going to be additional costs on the property tax base by way of health costs and social services costs that weren't there before.

They were going to do all of this — and get this; this is what led and continues to lead to the problems we have in front of us — no longer in a net trade-off situation; that is, they were no longer going to be in a situation in which the monies that were moved from property taxes to provincial taxes were going to be balanced by taxes going the other way. What we ended up with is some \$600 million worth of shortfall; that is, monies for costs pushed on to the property tax base that municipalities are now just beginning to realize they have to cope with and find ways to deal with.

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So there's the centralization the government has imposed particularly with respect to the education taxes. Add to that the fact that the government has insisted not only on that centralization but in persisting with a new assessment scheme for the province, a scheme they've put in place in one short year. Experts and people in the field who have done this kind of thing said to them time after time, "It cannot be done properly in this short a time," yet because of their rush to get this done, because they know best — and how many times have we seen that attitude before? — because of their persistence to get this done the way they wanted to do it, they messed it up. So last winter and last spring we saw a situation come to light particularly as it pertains to our business sector: protest after protest by small businesses as they, who thought they had a friend in the Mike Harris government, began to see that the impact of the new Mike Harris property tax scheme would have meant increases of 50% and more to their taxes.

We had businesses, whether businesses in my own community of St Clair or along Bloor Street, in the whole west end of Toronto, along Dundas, along various streets, along the main commercial strips, look at their increases under the Mike Harris tax scheme and say, "Not only is this an incredible and exorbitant increase, but the amount of money I'm being asked for," they would say to me, "to pay in additional taxes is more than my little business generates."

Yet even with that reality, the Harris government persisted in saying that what they were doing was right, that what they were doing was correct, that they knew best. It was only after weeks and weeks and months and months of pressure, protests and rallies that finally the Minister of Finance, Ernie Eves, had to relent and say, "Yes, we understand that there is going to be a problem; we understand that this new tax scheme is going to cause incredible hardship for many small businesses."

What happened? Then came the commitment to cap at 2.5% the increases that small businesses would face. No matter what their increase would be, it would be capped at 2.5%. There was a bit of a sigh of relief, a sense that some small victory had been won, that for the time being at least, small businesses would not go under, that they would have the ability to continue to run their businesses with, yes, an increase of 2.5% a year for each of three years. Nobody particularly liked that idea, but compared to the 50%, 70% and 100% increases, it was easier to deal with.

Yet an interesting thing is happening. As I talk now to small businesses, while they continue to feel a sense of relief that finally the government, after increasing and incredible pressure, listened and had to react because you had no other choice, they're coming to me and saying, "But what's going to happen at the end of these three years?" I have to genuinely say to them that I don't know, because no one knows what's going to happen in three years' time. The only thing that's for sure is that between now and then there will be a provincial election. We know that part of the reason the government proceeded with that 2.5% cap was that it was also a convenient way to buy some time to get the issue past the next election.

But I want to say to each of those small businesses who a year or a year and a half ago, when my colleagues were saying to them, "This is what's going to happen; you're going to see big increases as a result of what the Mike Harris government is about to do" — there was, to be frank, an air of disbelief among them. They didn't quite believe that this government, which was supposed to be a pro-business government, would actually bring about a tax scheme that would do that to them, that would cause those kinds of increases to them. It was only when they saw the evidence, when they actually saw the projections from the municipalities, that they began to understand that what we were saying was the truth, that what we were saying to them would happen was actually going to happen. Then we began to work together, and that led, as I say, to the pressure building and the government having to finally cave in and agree at least to the 2.5% cap.

But I say to them now, the one thing that's for sure is that you cannot trust the Mike Harris government to deliver on sensible changes when it comes to property tax and to the whole property tax system. If you think that simply by buying time this government is going to be able to fix this problem in a way that's going to mean anything other than huge increases when that three-year period is up, then just think again, I say to those small business operators and owners, of what the situation was a year and a half ago when we were predicting there would be big increases that would drive many small businesses out of business and that was what was about to happen. I say to them to think again before you give any support to this government, because three years from now, two and a half years from now, the last thing you want to do is to see Mike Harris in a position to bring in place the rest of the market value assessment system that will then increase those taxes big time for small businesses.

When it comes to the business side — I have talked a little bit about that and I want to touch on another area of this — the business occupancy tax is another big piece of this change that we have before us very directly tonight. The Mike Harris government, with great fanfare a year and a half ago, said, "We're getting rid of the business occupancy tax." I didn't hear very much said by them at that point about the fact that all they were doing was simply shifting the responsibility for paying that tax from the operator of the business to the owner of the property. They weren't getting rid of a tax in the sense that they were eliminating the payment of the tax; they were for those particular individuals who operated the business, but they didn't talk a lot at that point about the fact that they were simply shifting the cost on to someone else. Interestingly enough, we have to remind people that it was also as a result of some pressure by municipalities, which were having trouble collecting some of the business occupancy taxes — businesses were getting into difficulties — that the government proceeded with that change.

We then found ourselves in a situation where the government had to deal with the reality that in making that change, first of all, the owners of those commercial properties were now going to be responsible for the payment of those taxes; and, second and more fundamentally, they realized only too late, because again they wouldn't listen to anything that we or other people had to say on this score, that the legislative changes they had brought about omitted the ability of the owners of those commercial properties, the landlords of those properties, to pass on to the operators of the businesses, as they had up until that point, the responsibility for paying the business occupancy tax.

People were caught in the middle of leases, and if they were lucky enough to have had provisions in the leases that said, "All tax increases are paid by the operator of the business," then they could pass that on, but if they were, as many were, in a situation where they had lease arrangements that said that the landlord or the owner paid for the taxes and the business operator or the tenant paid for all of the other costs, utilities etc, then you had a situation in

which the landlords — and I'm talking here particularly of small landlords, people who own a commercial property, people who have invested many of their life savings in owning a small shop, a small commercial property on St Clair Avenue, on Bloor Street, on Dundas Street, on College Street, streets like that right across this metropolis — found themselves all of a sudden holding the bag and being responsible for hundreds and sometimes thousands of dollars in additional taxes.

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The government finally agreed and relented on that and said, "Yes, we realize we made a mistake." So in the last bill they brought forward, Bill 16, they brought in a provision that allowed landlords to pass those costs on to the business operators, the tenants, for the life of the lease.

It looked like the problem had been fixed, except for the issue of the deadlines. When did they put the deadline by which the landlord had to apply to the tenant for that increase? The middle of the summer. The deadline was in July. What happened? In many instances, I suspect in most if not all instances, that deadline came and went, and not only were the owners of those commercial properties never aware that the deadline existed, never told that the deadline existed, because (a) they did not know how much the money was that they were supposed to collect and (b) nobody told them what the deadline was, but the municipalities, which were supposed to be in the role of implementing that change, were often not aware of what that deadline was.

Once again we had the situation over this past summer where the government had to deal with the reality that one more change they had brought about was causing havoc, this time again in the small business sector. As I say, most of the people I've heard from and am concerned with are those individuals, families, who have invested their life savings in owning a small property, have operated a business perhaps some years for themselves and have rented out the property and now are caught with hundreds if not thousands of dollars in increases in property taxes.

Here we are, finally, as a result of pressure. We called on the government during the summer, towards the end of the summer, in the early fall, to bring about legislation that would change that deadline and here we are now with a change in this legislation that will do that. This is the problem that I want to bring to the government's attention. While we are happy — and as I said, we will support this legislation because at least it provides an extension of the deadline — that the deadline is being extended, I want to be clear that the extension of this deadline, while it's October 30 on the residential side — and I'm going to talk a little bit about the residential side — on the commercial side, as it relates to this problem of the business occupancy tax, the actual deadline for this request by the owner of the property to be able to recoup the business occupancy taxes, is not October 30 but is October 16. Here we are on the evening of October 5, some 10 or 11 days away from that deadline, dealing with the legislation in front of us that will provide some relief, will extend that deadline, but in my view it may not be enough. It will not

give people the adequate notice they need, because the experience so far on this has been that people don't trust any timelines and deadlines until they actually see that the legislation has been passed.

With that in mind, I have been calling on the government to not only bring in these legislative changes but to understand that, on the basis of the experience to date, this particular deadline that's in this piece of legislation in front of us will not work and may not work. It may very well do the job in a number of cases — people may be aware now because of the ongoing debate there has been on this — but if you think of it in terms of good administration, good public policy, how sensible is it to pass on October 5, likely October 6 by the time we pass this if this bill comes forward tomorrow again, a piece of legislation that extends a deadline to some 10 days after that? How much time will there be for people to really become aware that this deadline has been extended? What I fear is that we may very well have to be back here one more time because the government has persisted in this deadline.

We had suggested simply shifting the deadlines another two weeks. That would have given people almost a month's notice. In fact, I have drafted some amendments that I still hope, given we're not going to finish this bill tonight, the government and the minister will think about seriously and allow us at least a brief time to go into committee of the whole and to deal with those amendments. We have prepared a package of amendments, which I offer to the Minister of Finance and to the government to look at seriously, that will simply shift the deadlines by two weeks and help to address that problem in terms of having people have adequate notice once the legislation is passed.

I want to be very clear. The government can do what it will in terms of passing this bill. We have indicated that because there is an extension in the bill we're quite prepared to help pass the legislation, because what we see in front of us is a lot better than what was there before. As one group that has been calling consistently for the extension of the appeal deadline, given that we have the appeal extended in the bill in front of us, we are going to support it. But I would just say to the minister and the government and the parliamentary assistant, if you believe this is going to resolve the problems, then you still have not fully understood the impact of what you're doing out there. A very simple proposal such as I have put today in very clear amendments and given to the minister's office would help to at least reduce the possibility that you're going to have more problems in this business occupancy tax area. I leave that in the government's hands in terms of whether they want to take that offer up or not, but it's there, the amendments are drafted and we could get them passed probably in half an hour in this place.

I want to talk a little bit about the other side of this whole tax mess, which is what has been happening on the residential side. I have talked so far on the business side and have done so because I really have felt during this whole process that if a government that purports, like the Harris government, to be the friends of small business can

so badly screw up a whole process of legislation in terms of putting in place changes so dramatic, changes so drastic as to cause the kind of upheaval they have caused in the small business sector, if they could be as insensitive to the small business sector, how much more insensitive could they be to the residential side? There we have seen the problem reflected in huge increases.

In my own community in west Toronto, in the Davenport and Davenport communities, I can tell you hundreds of people have been through my office. I have seen no other issue over the last number of years as this particular question of the property tax changes that the Mike Harris government has brought about generate the kind of interest and anger we have here both on the business side and on the residential side.

We have a situation in which many seniors and many people on fixed incomes are having to deal with and come up with payment of increases of \$300-plus over the next couple of years, and that's only because the municipality of Metropolitan Toronto at least had the gumption to put in place a phase-in of the system, a phase-in which I will readily admit was allowed in the legislation that the government put together, but a phase-in which only phases in the problems. Because this change is being brought about in the way this government has done it, you have many people who own their homes, older homes, seeing huge increases in their property taxes, and for many of them who are seniors the notion of saying, "We'll defer the increase," as the legislation allows and as the provision allows, until they sell or otherwise dispose of the property is not a notion they particularly like. Many seniors don't like the idea of leaving those debts for their children, and so it's not something that resolves the problem.

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It is something, though, that adds to the hardship, as they are having to find that almost \$300 or \$350 a year for the next couple of years, and on a fixed income, a pensioner's income, those are not easy amounts to find. That may not sound like a lot to people sitting in here, but it's a lot of money for seniors who have put all of their life savings into owning that home, for people for whom that was a central focus of their activities and their energies and who looked forward to being able to leave that house for their children, as their legacy to them. That \$300 or \$350 increase a year is going to be felt.

As I said before, I have never seen the kind of anger that I have had expressed in my office by constituent after constituent, and the appeal issue was something that was very much alive during the summer months as the earlier deadline loomed and as people were realizing that they had to appeal. Once we finally, as a result of the pressure that we put on the government, had a sense that they were prepared to extend the deadline, that subsided somewhat, but I know it's still there. I know there will be appeal after appeal. We know there are thousands of appeals that have now been launched, and I don't know how the government is going to handle that load, because it's something that's going to cause a lot of nightmares administratively. The

government is going to have to deal with that and the government is going to have to be responsible for that.

On that piece I once again call upon the government, realizing that what they have done has caused the incredible number of appeals to be launched by individual owners and residential owners, to be lax in the way in which they apply even that \$20 fee, which I know doesn't sound like a lot of money, but for people on fixed incomes that \$20 fee to file the appeal is something that is not easy to come by. I know the government and the minister are making provision that where the amount of assessment and those issues can be resolved administratively before going to an appeal, there will be an opportunity for that \$20 to be waived or to be in effect given back to the owners of the property. I hope the government will continue to keep that in mind and that the good people at the Assessment Review Board who are having to deal with this problem now will also keep that in mind as they are dealing with the implications of what we have in front of us.

That's a summary of some of the issues that we have in front of us and that have led us to this point. We have a situation in which this government persisted in putting forward a legislative scheme to put in place a new property tax system which had as its objective nothing more than to simply push on to the property tax base some \$600 million in the trade-off of taxes between the province and the municipalities alone.

I know that if I had been a fly on the wall in the meetings of the Progressive Conservative Party caucus of the day, one of the things that would have been said to members of the government as a way to sell them on the idea of doing this was: "Don't worry. As tough as this may be, this is only an issue that affects Toronto. It's only Toronto where there's a huge problem because of the out-of-date assessment system, and so the only people who are going to be screaming at the end of the day are people from Toronto."

Lo and behold, what have we found? The member for Renfrew North was just explaining what was happening on the business side in his own community. During the end of this past summer and in the early fall, as municipality after municipality has had to deal with this, we have found that it was no longer a Toronto problem. In Hamilton the same kinds of problems that we are seeing here in Toronto are taking place, particularly on the business side.

In York region, that famous part of the 905 area that was going to have no problems whatsoever with this, you have small communities, particularly in places like the village of Kleinburg, where businesses are saying they're going to go under unless something is done, because the increases that the small business sector is going to have to bear there, and some of the residential as well but particularly the small business sector, are just going to be exorbitant. Regional council there is going to be looking next week, I believe, at what they can do. They're one of the ones that didn't opt into the phase-in, and I'm not sure I can blame them. As much as I agreed with the position taken by the council here in Toronto to phase in, because they didn't have any other choice, I also understood then,

and understand now, the reasons why municipalities would be hesitant to phase in the 2.5% caps. They know that with the download on to the property tax base of hundreds of millions, some \$600 million across the province, of costs that they are going to have to somehow pass on, costs which may not be apparent this year all at once but which will grow over the next couple of years, as they have to deal with those, one of the things that they are going to find, if they opted into the 2.5% cap for the small business side, is that the only place left for them to raise that money from is the residential side.

I said earlier to the small business sector that they ought not to trust what Mike Harris will do in three years' time with the rest of the property tax increases that would apply to them. I say to the residential owners that they ought to continue to watch very closely what's going to happen over the next year and two years because we're certainly far from the end of the story as far as what's going to happen as the full impact of the download of the Mike Harris government, the shifting of costs on to the property tax base, is felt in municipality after municipality. That's going to be a problem.

We're going to continue to see this mess evolve. We're going to continue to see a situation in which municipality after municipality, not just the city of Toronto, not just here in the inner core of Ontario's largest municipality, but whether it's in Hamilton, whether it's in the rest of the 905 area, whether it's in other communities across the province, as the full impact of the property tax scheme that Mike Harris has set in place takes effect, we're going to see negative changes, we're going to see big increases on either or both of the residential or the small business side.

I want to just say, as I conclude my remarks, that this is a bill that we should not have had to deal with. This is a bill that is only here because of the incompetence of the Mike Harris government. This bill is only here because of the rush that they have had in trying to get this thing through. This is only here because of the arrogance and the attitude that they have taken on, that they know best and that they are not wanting to listen to anyone who has an opinion that's different than theirs.

Now they're having to realize, even though they will never admit it, even though we had government members stand up and talk tonight about why they were bringing forward this piece of legislation, not one of them had the gall or the decency to admit that this was a piece of legislation that was fixing a mistake that they caused. And yet people out there know, because they have been seeing the impact as the tax bills have come in, what the new Mike Harris property tax system is all about.

We've even had the ridiculous situation, had this legislation not come about, of people receiving their property tax bills after the deadline for appealing the assessment would have passed, because in some municipalities, by the time the end of the summer was here, bills still had not gone out. There may even still be one or two municipalities where the bills have not gone out. There are many who are still trying to sort this through. You had the

situation where municipalities were sending out the bills after the deadline for appealing the assessment had passed.

Of course this piece of legislation is necessary. As I said, we will assist in getting it through. But we should not have had to be here to deal with it. I would have rather tonight been at St Josephat school, a school in the Davenport community where they are dealing with another equally important issue; that is, the potential closure of that school brought about by the changes that the Mike Harris government has brought about with respect to the push and the download and the increases on to the property tax base of those costs.

We're going to continue to see the problems, whether in education, certainly in health care or here on the property tax system. The problem is far from over. We will assist in passing this piece of legislation because it helps to remedy the small part of the problem, an important part, for people who believe they should appeal the assessment, whether it's on their commercial property or on their residential property. But let me say it here now, Speaker: This is not the end of this issue and this is not the end of the property tax mess that Mike Harris and his government have left for this province.

2040

Mr Pouliot: Mr Speaker, perhaps trusting your memory, you will recall that it was the New Democratic Party who begged the government to extend the tax appeal deadline. This evening we're happy that they finally listened to our common sense, to our suggestion. We don't intend to delay passage of this bill. We want to ensure its quick passage. We will keep our promise. We're not tied to this bill umbilically or otherwise. We have no responsibility with their endeavours.

Mr Speaker, you will know that this is the sixth property tax bill that the Conservatives have introduced. And each and every time, it was to correct the bill before it. The question is: Are we to expect more tax bills to correct the one before it, Bill 63 to correct this one? People were getting their tax notices, their new notice of assessment, after the deadline. It makes no sense. It did not allow people a chance to appeal — well into the fiscal year. The municipal fiscal year starts on January 1; ours and that of our federal counterpart starts on April 1. You had a condensed year when dealing with the Harrisites, with the Harris government.

Just last week, I had a small merchant in the great riding of Lake Nipigon — you know our special part of Ontario; you've been there: The riding borders on the legendary. We're 26% of the overall land mass between Lake Superior, Lake Nipigon, overshadowed by the bay, fully 1,000 miles long. You can relate to that; it's more difficult for people who are more restricted and live in other special parts of the province to have a relative idea of the vastness, the magnificence of Lake Nipigon, truly the size of Germany. This entrepreneur calls me and says: "Gilles, I have a problem, an impasse, a dilemma that I must deal with. I've just received my assessment notice and I'll be paying a lot more taxes. In fact, I've brought it up to our monthly meeting of our local chamber of

commerce. They were appalled and yet they were faced with the same problems. Their taxes were going up as well."

Then he said, "I thought Mike Harris was a friend of small business." But then he goes on to tell me that he knows that Mike Harris and that party have just given a break on their business occupancy tax to the big banks. He says to me, "Gilles, how can Mike Harris be a friend of the big banks and be a friend of small business at the same time? Surely he doesn't have that many friends." I said: "He's your friend the same as the big banks are your friend. Mike Harris is not there to ameliorate, to improve your lot." This is not what the mantra says.

This is a group of people who were committed to what they referred to as current value assessment. They were to instil, to decree fairness. People were to be happier. But it's not that simple because there is another side to the ledger. All along they were intent on downloading. You see, they were to take the credit in an ideal world for balancing the books, for having a zero deficit budget and perhaps a possibility to attack the deficit. But in order to do that and to shake hands and make people feel good and give them a 30% tax cut, which incidentally benefits mostly the rich in this province, the 6% or 10% of people who are well off and, simply put, the people who need this less, in order to satisfy those appetites, that of the tax cut and coming closer to zero deficit, they had to download; in other words, shift responsibilities. They were going to take the good news and saddle you with the bad news.

I've said before, during the two-minute response allocation, that the government will take credit for all the jobs created under any circumstances regardless of whether they're centred on a service grade, the McJobs, the low-paying, the second job. But when the economy turns, when the bad news arrives, when the cycle hits, then they will blame Asia, South Korea or they will blame those fellows at Long-Term International, or Long-Term Capital Management. They refuse to look in the mirror and to say, "We have very little control, for our policies are going too quickly, they're impacting too many people."

It's been said before by the ministry to expect fully 600,000 appeals. Out of three million units being assessed, 600,000 appeals. It will take forever to hear them. In the meantime, small entrepreneurs will be burdened, many of which in the down cycle will catch pneumonia, they'll go bankrupt, they will be out of business. Many homeowners will have to sell the property, no longer being able to live there, partly because of the tax increase due to reassessment and partly because it will hit them so suddenly, it will be so massive, it will be tout de suite, pronto, and they won't be able to sustain the added cost.

Will they go cap in hand to Mike Harris and say: "Do you have a contingency plan? Do you have some encouragement? How do I see the next fiscal year?" Or, as has been suggested at committee, a Conservative member said, "If you can't afford to live there, you should sell the property"; or have you ever heard of a reverse mortgage

where you decrease your equity as you get to be the recipient to satisfy the appetite of an ill-conceived idea?

The Liberals, I'm sure — one need not speculate a great deal — looked at market value assessment. I know that the New Democratic Party when we were the government looked at it, we had a good look at it, and we tried to balance, to have an equilibrium. We said that on the one hand some people have not been reassessed for a good many years. Is it fair when you compare the value of one property vis-à-vis another within a certain location? Is it fair to the others? We tossed the idea back and forth. But what we could not come to grips with, what we could not do in conscience, is to burden small business people and homeowners with a tax scheme that they could ill afford. So one more time, more or less, it could be said that we succumbed. We said, "No, let the human dimension have its day."

But ideologically, philosophically, we are opposite to the Common Sense Revolutionaries. What makes us tick is different from them. We warned them: "Please don't do it. Do it in instalments, should you do it. Look at the application. Don't do it in haste. Don't do it when you're tired, because you have too much on your plate, you'll make mistakes." Well, the annals speak for themselves: six property tax bills, each and every one referring to the one before it. Is this competence? Is this the way you would wish to have your administration, your government, pass legislation? Or would you not, time after time, begin to question their capability? More and more as we digest, as we examine, as we scrutinize the legislation that they put forward, we begin to realize that competence is not the forte, not the flagship of this administration, quite the contrary.

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Bien au contraire, monsieur le Président. Nous faisons face depuis hier et aujourd'hui consécutivement à plusieurs projets de loi qui projettent le gouvernement du premier ministre Harris sous une lumière douteuse, géré par une incompétence grandissante si peu observée dans les annales de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

There's been no shortage of warnings. We've done our legislative duty. We've said through amendments, we've said through counsel on a one-on-one basis, first, don't do it, but if you're intent on doing it, we can't stop you, but do it by instalments, do it progressively and see what the ramifications are when the rubber hits the road, the application in the real world. Give it time to see how it works.

But the government pushed through. They knew what they were doing. They had the whiz kids working at it. They were going to have a look-alike contest to gather in the Premier's office, all vice-presidents wearing suits, and they were going to come up with a crystal ball, for those people know. They certainly know more than legislators with the opposition. I ask you, Speaker, would you invest your hard-earned cash, your pension plan in the hands of those whiz kids? I certainly would not.

Mr Conway: As opposed to a man named Meriwether?

Mr Pouliot: The John Meriwethers of this world maybe have gathered — I'm looking for him — with Long-Term Capital Management and the whiz kids and the crystal ball, because I wish to know how can I put — for every \$3,000 they'll be able to go and fetch me magic, the magic wand, they'll come up with \$200,000 worth of credit. I've always looked for John, I've always looked for bankers who know John, unable to find them. But maybe it is the kind of whiz kids that you find in the Premier's office and get a hold of these bills. They've got all the gizmos and the gadgets.

But Harry Smith calls from the hardware store up north. He just got his tax. The rubber has hit the road. He is out of business. He has beaten the path so often with the chartered bank he can no longer go there. He doesn't want to face what used to be a friendly banker, because the banker is old-fashioned; he wants him to deposit now and then. Look at Ms Jones, forced to sell the house. She raised her family in that house. Not uncommon, it's all of us, too busy working, keeping the family unit together, trying to make ends meet, trying to survive on an ordinary income. That's Mr and Mrs Canada, that's Mr and Mrs Ontario. It is most of us. Why hurt them?

If you don't have the substance, because you are not political pundits, at least have the courtesy, Conservatives, to go back to your ridings and to shake hands with people and to make them feel good. You don't need a lot of substance, but you need some style. You need to believe in what you do. You're helping them.

Now the power of the purse has been severely impacted, and, just as importantly, it's the confidence in the system, that we want to feel good with you. Who's in charge across the hall? Who's guiding us? Am I in good hands? Can I look to the future with confidence? You're on your heels. You're not progressive, you're totally defensive. You screwed up on education: rotating strikes, legal-illegal work stoppage, 126,000 educators out, people refusing to partake in extracurricular activities — the education of the future, of our children, of yours.

Health care: You juggled the books while people are waiting for a visit from a relative in the corridor and they have the impression that you're there playing politics. "We're spending less per capita but more overall. This is an open-ended program. We have a fiscal responsibility." I need a transfusion; I can't get a bed. No bed, no blood.

Those are the largest. You were swift, you were deliberate, systematic and expedient when it came to the less fortunate, to those who don't have much of a voice, because with you people, I can assure you, they don't talk much, they say little. They're the marginalized. You dislocated them even more but it was easy. You thought you had the pulse of Ontarians and you would give them the back of the hand. Tactically, it seemed to work.

We were reminded during question period today as we approach winter — it's ironic. The government tells you, "We're experiencing a period of recovery. People have more money in their jeans, more money in their pockets," yet you're confronted, you're asked: "Why is it then that you have more people without shelter, that you have more

people at the food banks than you ever had before? How do you reconcile, how do you marry the two, how do you explain that? Have we lost our civility?"

No one wishes that and yet you're going to run out of park benches this winter. If there is a regression of El Niño and its counterpart, La Niña, takes over, it's going to get colder. One has already frozen, has been diagnosed as frozen to death. No one is to blame, no one wants people to get like this, but it's a sad reflection on our society. There is only so much Outreach for the homeless that you can sell. You pay 36 cents, you sell them for a buck, maybe you get a tip, so you've got to sell a lot of copies at 64 cents of profit during a day to eat, to feed yourself. More than 5,000 — I don't feel good when I see this. This is where the effort should be. If you were well organized, you would have had time to do that, because nothing else matters. This is the link. This is how you will be judged.

Quand je me regarde le matin, je me déssole. Quand j'arrive ici à l'Assemblée et quand je me compare, je me console. Souvent, et je le répète, à la veille d'un hiver qui risque d'être sévère, nous avons aussi, dans cette prospérité malheureusement trop artificielle, plus de démunis, plus de marginalisés, plus d'esseulés, plus de pauvres, plus de sans-abri que jamais auparavant. Comment expliquer le phénomène? Comment expliquer et accepter en conscience un système qui a permis aux riches, aux mieux nantis, au profit des moins riches, des pauvres et des moins biens nantis, d'élargir la marge?

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Ce que nous avons ici, c'est que nous avons permis aux riches de s'échapper du peloton. Nous avons dit à ceux qui peuvent courir un peu plus vite de nous laisser, de laisser les autres à l'arrière. C'est à coût de dimension humaine, de barème, de jugement d'un gouvernement. Jamais je n'aurais cru qu'un jour — et je répète, en ce soir d'attente, parce qu'ils sont plus nombreux que jamais auparavant — durant une période de prospérité, cette disparité, non seulement on lui a permis de continuer mais on lui a permis de se propager. Nous acceptons, avec un semblant de décence qui nous convient de plus en plus mal, que nos frères et nos sœurs oeuvrent dans une misère relative pendant que les plus privilégiés dans notre société soient permis de profiter d'une situation jamais égalée auparavant.

I only wish, when we look at the proposals from the government, we could have the assurance that when the opposition presents an amendment, it will not deter the spirit of what's being put forward but is there to help, that there wouldn't be this kind of reluctance, unease, whereby, "If it's not from us, we're not going to let it pass." We literally could have saved months in the program of the government being put forward in a fashion which is easier to understand, better organized and more applicable.

Je vous remercie de m'avoir accordé l'opportunité, avec mes collègues, de partager cette heure qui était la nôtre.

The Speaker: Member from London Centre.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I'm glad that my colleague left me just a few moments to relate to you a story that happened on the weekend.

I was canvassing with some friends on Hamilton Mountain and came across a woman 80 years old. When we asked her what concerns she had with the policies of the current government, she invited us in and sat us down at her kitchen table and talked to us about her tax assessment. She talked to us about the \$600 increase in her taxes on her very modest, unimproved two-bedroom bungalow where she'd lived for over 40 years and which she felt she was in danger of losing. She explained to us that she was very frightened when she got the bill, that her daughter and her son were both away — no one could help her to deal with this — and that she'd missed the deadline for appealing her assessment.

There are hundreds of people like this around the province, and people in the opposition parties tried to tell the government that the massive changes they have caused to happen in the tax system that are going to be extremely detrimental are happening so quickly, with so little real information to people, with so little flexibility around the numbers of appeals that are happening that people like this woman are living in fear of losing their homes.

The government says there's no reason for people to fear, but instead of putting this kind of legislation into the original bill, instead of heeding the almost universal cries from municipalities, from the opposition, from citizens themselves who realized what was happening, they didn't do it. Now we're here debating a bill that has to be passed because they refused to listen to the cries for help from people that were very clear long ago. It's just another example of their incompetence, another example of their insistence on pushing things through without looking at the consequences for real people in real communities.

Of course, we have pledged ourselves to support this. The sooner it comes in, the better. I want that woman to know that she still is going to have time for appeal. There should be an extension. The problem is that it should have been there from the beginning.

I also know how overburdened the Assessment Review Board is. It is impossible for them to do their work with integrity if they are expected to push all of these matters through at the kind of speed that the government wants to go.

We want the government to be very clear. We don't want to be here again and again fixing up the messes that they make with their hate.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Conway: I want to commend the three previous speakers from the New Democratic Party for detailing in a variety of specific ways the negative impacts of this dramatic change to the assessment and related taxation.

There is no question, when I think back to about a year ago, that the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers came to this Legislature and made a very blunt plea to the Legislature that basically said: "Don't do this. You're attempting far too much. It is too complicated. It is

going to lead to all kinds of unintended consequences." That has been borne out.

I think the government had to know, and I have a lot of regard for my friend the Minister of Finance, but he had to have known, because I know he was told by his assessment officials, that when you literally throw every single piece of the Assessment Act up in the sky on a windy afternoon, it is not likely that it is all going to float back into place.

In my community, as I mentioned earlier, the surprise has been the very substantial tax increases that these changes have visited upon small business people. As a residential taxpayer in the city of Pembroke, I've seen my own taxes on the same assessment base increase by 5.5% to 6%, but that's nothing compared to what the small businesses are faced with. As I said a while ago, I have small businesses that have seen their taxes double. I've got businesses now that are paying more in tax than they are paying in rent, and when I go to the assessment office, when I talk to knowledgeable people, the substantial reasons for these huge increases have to do with changes in provincial government policy. That's the part that leads me to say that we absolutely should extend the appeal date, as a minimum.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): There are two very hard-hit communities. One of them is my own, Brant-Haldimand. Brant-Haldimand was formed with the consideration by a former government that there would be 350,000 people in that area. They failed to realize you can't get there from here. Now we have 82 politicians taking care of 100,000 people. They are using an elephant to pick up toothpicks — strictly overburdened with bureaucracy and politicians.

The second one hard hit is Hamilton-Wentworth. Some 12,000 hours of citizens' time went into a \$600,000 study telling Hamilton-Wentworth how to save money. They came out with recommendations about a foot thick, which went straight into the garbage.

This government gave both those municipalities the tools to deal with the elderly, with the businesses. Both those municipalities refused to use one of the tools that were given them, and consequently they are suffering.

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Mr Bradley: First of all, in many of the municipalities it is the new provincial taxes which are very onerous on the people of those areas, rather than the people themselves generating that kind of new expenditure.

I want to indicate to the members of the NDP who spoke that they may be interested to know that what the government members are doing now is saying, "Go to the municipality and they'll fix everything up, they'll have all these rebates for you," when the problem has been caused by the Mike Harris government's downloading on to municipalities.

There's a policy out there that somehow bigger is better. The Conservatives of years ago were much more correct when they assumed that smaller is often better. There are a number of proponents in the Niagara region who say, "If only we could get rid of Wainfleet, Fort Erie

and Port Colborne and so on, our problems would all be solved." That simply isn't true. Dr Joseph Kushner of Brock University, an eminent economist, along with some others, did a study which was published, I think first of all in *Municipal World* and then in other places, indicating clearly that a situation where you encounter economies of scale when you go to a larger unit doesn't automatically happen. There are some circumstances in business where it happens, in industry, but it does not automatically happen in other places. I certainly would agree with him on that.

The fundamental problem we have here is that this government is emulating what they did in New Jersey, an American example. The Republican Governor of New Jersey cut state income taxes by 30% and then thrust on to municipalities all kinds of new responsibilities which are costing local taxpayers a lot of money.

Mrs McLeod: I noted in the comments made by the finance critic for the New Democratic Party that he indicated there was no shortage of warnings for the government about what the impact of their poorly conceived property tax changes would be, particularly on small business taxpayers.

I know the member was speaking of the warnings that were received from opposition parties, and certainly they were frequent in number, but there were also significant warnings issued by the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers. Here are some of the things they said during the 1997 public hearings on the so-called reforms of the Tory government: "The system will be immensely complicated by creating 84 classes and subclasses and up to 156 tax rates"; "Implementation is a high-risk strategy for the financial health of the municipal sector"; "It will create serious problems"; "It is a recipe for administrative chaos."

It's absolutely amazing to hear the member for Brant-Haldimand tonight continuing to ignore, as indeed his entire government has continued to ignore, the concerns that were expressed throughout by municipalities, to suggest that the problem now is that municipalities are not using the tools given to them by this government. One of the tools presumably was the government's withdrawing of the business occupancy tax, a very good move for the government. It made it look as though the government was reducing property taxes, but of course that was always municipal revenue. It was the municipalities they were taking revenue away from. This wasn't the government giving a tax break to the businesses. In fact, the municipalities have had to put that business tax back on to small businesses, and that alone has meant an increase in taxes of 10% to 15%.

Then there is the fact that the chaos is going to continue, because in the course of all this the government, ostensibly having done all of the downloading on to the municipalities in order to take education off the property tax, I remind the government and the public again, failed to do that, left 50% of education on the residential property taxpayer and —

The Speaker: Response, member for Dovercourt.

Mr Silipo: I appreciate the comments of all members. I just want to say particularly to the member for Brant-Haldimand that you can play the shell game only so long and then at some point it's over, because municipalities actually understand what you have handed them. They are having to now deal with the impact of the various changes you've made, which we have talked about tonight and will have occasion to continue talking about. They're now having to implement your policies, and they don't like it. You can say that you gave them all these tools, but the reality is you didn't give them the information, let alone what you did to them with respect to the download and how much you pushed on to the property tax base, which was more than what you took up to the provincial tax base. You didn't even give them the basic information with which to make those decisions in many municipalities, so I don't blame those municipalities that did not opt for the 2.5% cap, because many of them did not themselves realize the full impact of what they were getting into until it was too late for them to make that decision.

Even then there was a deadline by which municipalities had to decide whether to opt in or opt out of applying that 2.5% cap, and many of them didn't have all the information in front of them when they made those decisions. In Toronto they did, they managed to do that. We'll see down the line whether that was a good decision. It was a good decision with respect to the business side. It may not turn out to be such a good decision with respect to the residential side, which is where they now have to go for any increases as they size up the balance of the off-load and the download in the next couple of years.

On the other hand, you're going to have municipalities that are still trying to grapple with this, and I will not be surprised if we have bill number eight in this saga be another bill that extends the deadline and allows municipalities that didn't opt in before to opt in now. Maybe that's what will happen next.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): It's indeed a pleasure to rise to speak in support of the bill and to follow up on some of the comments we've heard from the opposition parties, both in their principal debate and in the two-minute responses.

There seems to be an ongoing belief on the other side that the world started on June 8, 1995. That's immensely flattering, but unfortunately it's just not true. Taking a step back to where this all started, it was precisely because the NDP government and all of its predecessors of all stripes had failed to recognize the fact that there were growing inequities even within communities, never mind between communities, when it came to the property taxes that were being borne not just by residences, but by commercial and industrial taxpayers as well.

Here in the city of Toronto we had a situation where downtown Toronto hadn't been reassessed since 1940 — 58 years out of date. Yet out where I live in Scarborough we had assessment values that were up to date within a decade. Across Ontario we had some responsible municipalities. The region of Niagara had gone to market value

assessment; they were using 1992 values. The bottom line is that we did not see, however, a majority of municipalities that had taken that step, for some fairly obvious reasons.

As the members in this chamber know, market value assessment, or current value assessment as it's called in this iteration, is a net sum game. For every person whose taxes go up a dollar within each category, there is someone else whose taxes go down by that dollar. But the problem is that the previous government, particularly under pressure from the Toronto council, their farm team, did not see fit to antagonize the taxpayers in downtown Toronto, despite the fact that 75% of the people in the city resided in those communities which had more or less up-to-date assessments and were being overcharged. Pandering to their supporters in downtown Toronto, some of the crassest politics, they decided to simply walk away from the issue.

There's no doubt that, having come out with the first bill, there has been a need to go back and reflect on a number of changes and improvements. That in large measure is a testament to the fact that we trusted municipalities. We trusted them to do the right thing. It's encouraging to stand here right now knowing that 36% of all the municipalities in Ontario came up with taxes that had no increase, or a decrease. Much as the opposition members won't stand and talk about those communities, the reality is there are communities in Ontario who for the calendar year 1998 reduced property taxes by 24%. There's another 37% of all the municipalities who increased their taxes from zero to 5%, by and large inflation and more or less consistent with what they've done in years gone by, when there wasn't supposedly all this other muddying of the water. So we're already up to 73% of all the municipalities that were at or below inflation. That's a clear majority. Where does that leave the other 27%? Where does that leave communities like Haldimand-Norfolk, which saw a 17.9% increase?

The member for Dovercourt stood there and suggested — I don't want to misquote him; his exact words were, "It's a shell game to talk about potential savings for the property taxpayers from amalgamation." Clearly you don't get the same clipping service that the other members in the Legislature get.

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Let me quote from an article in the St Catharines Standard, October 3, where an individual, just a property taxpayer, had done some research about what was happening elsewhere in Ontario. He wrote quite an extensive letter to the Standard talking about the savings that had occurred in Chatham-Kent. They eliminated 138 politicians by going through their merger, 23 municipalities brought down to one; the 138 politicians saved \$650,000. By buying one insurance policy instead of 23, they saved \$527,000. Reducing the number of municipal buildings from 26 to six saved \$2.371 million. In fact, the budget this year, with a number of service improvements to the taxpayers in Chatham-Kent, is \$5.5 million less than the

aggregate of the 23 budgets in the communities it replaced. Talk about a shell game; talk about obfuscation.

The fact of the matter is that responsible municipalities all across this province recognize the savings, recognize the possibility for new efficiencies and new ways of delivering service, recognize that having been formed in 1840 and 1850, when the horse and buggy was the only way to get there from here, technology had dramatically changed how they should be dealing with their taxpayers. Responsible municipalities have taken that initiative. We've seen over 240 municipalities voluntarily merge themselves out of existence.

As the member probably knows as well, it didn't stop last year. You'd think having started a new three-year term that the councillors would probably be sitting there waiting for the end of this three-year term before we saw any new amalgamation initiatives. I'm pleased to say the minister has already signed off on a dozen more this year, and there are another dozen expected before the end of this year. These are politicians, barely one year into this term, who are putting themselves out of a job on January 1, 1999. They're putting the interests of the taxpayers ahead of the interests of the politicians, something that certainly was not true before June 8, 1995, in this chamber or else we would have seen property tax reform.

The members opposite suggest that somehow all of this information wasn't available to municipalities. I'm sorry to point out that the facts are that as far back as March, the government came up with what we called the on-line property tax assessment program, the first time ever that a provincial government had come up with an interactive computer simulation program, available over the Internet; 7,500 hits by municipalities going all the way back to March. Almost every property in the province was loaded in that database, every possible simulation: What would happen if they used the phase-in? What would happen if they used the 2.5% cap? What if the cap applied to only one sector, perhaps commercial or multi-unit residential or industrial? What would happen if you created new categories?

Every municipality in Ontario, for over six months, has had access to that information. At the same time, the ministry has had seminars and briefings for every municipality across the province. Our Ministry of Municipal Affairs and the Ministry of Finance have put out more publications than you can shake a stick at. The reality is that every one of those municipalities had the information long before they had to send out the property taxes, long before. To stand here and suggest that somehow they couldn't do what members on this side have their staff members do in a matter of literally seconds, print out a summary of all of the changes up and down, is really quite insulting to the municipal finance staff. Obviously they could do that; obviously the tools were there, the information was there.

Where the problem was — and again it's in only a handful of municipalities, but the reality is that for some it was a different political agenda they were following; for others, it may very well be a case that, because they had

not amalgamated, they still could not afford to have the kind of expertise in their finance department that we would have in the city of Toronto or Hamilton. Perhaps there was a need for even more hand holding. But the resources were there. Those municipalities could have simply picked up the phone and called the Ministry of Finance and absolutely every question would have been answered, or called their local member. I hope that even if they'd called an opposition member, they would have been given a responsible answer and the assistance they required.

The reality is that this bill simply allows, once again, those municipalities that decided to follow that different agenda one more escape valve, one more safety valve for their taxpayers. The taxpayers shouldn't be the pawn in all of this. They shouldn't be the ones suffering as a result of those different agendas. They should have the opportunity to file their assessments. I'm pleased to say that the minister came out and very publicly stated two weeks ago that 90% of all the people who are calling in and saying they have a question or a dispute with their assessment are being dealt with through what's called reconsideration, not even a formal appeal. The minister has said, for that 90%, "You're even going to get a refund of the small fee you pay when you file your assessment." So they're not even out a penny to have gone through this process.

Was it a daunting task to update for the first time in 58 years the values of 3.9 million properties? Absolutely. Are our hats off to all the people in the assessment branch, all the municipalities that did work responsibly? Absolutely.

For those few municipalities scaring their taxpayers, that have decided that fearmongering is more important than handling their duties responsibly, we've come up with this bill to give their taxpayers another break, another opportunity to file that assessment. The bottom line is that 90% of those people will walk away quite content when, in a timely fashion, the assessment branch deals with their question and concern.

The bottom line as well is that municipalities are rapidly running out of excuses. The reality is that there are no new initiatives being launched for January 1, 1999. It's going to be very interesting to go back into places like Niagara region, where they decided to take most of the special-purpose funds — would you like me to continue when next we do this, Mr Speaker?

The Speaker: Oh, absolutely.

Mr Gilchrist: Well, I thank you.

The Speaker: It now being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2127.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston
Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller
Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
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Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
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Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cornwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
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Downsview	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
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Durham West / -Ouest	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Durham-York	Munro, Julia (PC)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Eglinton	Saunderson, William (PC)	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	London South / -Sud	Wood, Bob (PC)
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Middlesex	Smith, Bruce (PC)
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Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président		
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)	Sarnia	Martin, Tony (ND)
Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)	Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Newman, Dan (PC)
Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif Barrett, Toby (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Norfolk	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough-Ellesmere	Curling, Alvin (L)
Northumberland	Carr, Gary (PC)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Brown, Jim (PC)
Oakville South / -Sud	Colle, Mike (L)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Oakwood	Caplan, David (L)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Oriole	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Simcoe East / -Est	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Oshawa	Patten, Richard (L)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)	Sudbury	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Ottawa East / -Est	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Sudbury East / -Est	Ramsay, David (L)
Ottawa-Rideau	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Timiskaming	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, président du Conseil de gestion
Ottawa South / -Sud	Cullen, Alex (L)	Victoria-Haliburton	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Ottawa West / -Ouest	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Waterloo North / -Nord	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Oxford	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Welland-Thorold	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Parkdale	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Wellington	Doyle, Ed (PC)
Parry Sound	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Wentworth East / -Est	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Perth	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Wentworth North / -Nord	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Peterborough	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Willowdale	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Port Arthur	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Wilson Heights	Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Fox, Gary (PC)	Windsor-Riverside	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Windsor-Sandwich	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Quinte	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	Windsor-Walkerville	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Rainy River	Conway, Sean G. (L)	York Centre / -Centre	Parker, John L. (PC)
Renfrew North / -Nord	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	York East / -Est	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
Riverdale	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	York Mills	Klees, Frank (PC)
S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York-Mackenzie	Sergio, Mario (L)
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bradley, James J. (L)	Yorkview	Kennedy, Gerard (L)
St Catharines		York South / -Sud	
		Nickel Belt	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Deuxième session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 6 October 1998

Mardi 6 octobre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 6 October 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 6 octobre 1998

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Today the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board announced the closure, potentially, of 15 Hamilton-area schools as a result of this government's funding formula. These decisions are not going to be made based on enrolment, as school boards traditionally have done in the past. These decisions are based on the bizarre formula of square footage that this government has imposed.

What you're now seeing is a situation where many inner-city schools, particularly downtown in my riding of Hamilton East, are going to be closed as a result of Mike Harris's and Dave Johnson's bizarre policies in regard to education that are hurting kids right across this province.

It's going to force the school board to close schools in the inner cities, in the heart of the communities, schools that are the soul of our communities, schools that have been there for 50, 60 and 70 years and have served those communities well, schools that still have many kids in there with wonderful programs. As a result of your cuts, as a result of your formula, these schools are now going to close.

I say very clearly to the Premier and to the Minister of Education: Every single school closure in the city of Hamilton as a result of your formula and your funding policy is going to be on your head and you will pay a price for it. It is irresponsible. It is disgraceful that you're forcing school boards to close schools in the inner cities, in the hearts of our communities in order to continue your absolutely bizarre and ridiculous education policy. You will pay a hell of a political price come election time.

BREAST CANCER

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): It's important for all of us to be aware that October is Breast Cancer Month. During this month there are many events that are planned across the province to look at the issue of breast cancer, at how we inform women about risk factors, at how we inform them about the breast screening program that's in place, at how we encourage them to face up to their own fear about the possibility of cancer and learn to act in a preventive way for themselves.

Breast cancer affects one out of nine women and that is an extremely important issue for us to keep in mind. Eighty per cent of women who are diagnosed with breast cancer are in fact able to be treated successfully and survive longer than the five-year survival period that tends to be the most common measure.

Very few of us have a situation where we have not had some connection with some loved one, some neighbour, some friend or ourselves who have been affected by breast cancer. It will be important for all of us in our ridings to ensure that we are seen to be supporting the efforts toward better research into breast cancer, better screening for breast cancer and better treatment for breast cancer.

It is a scourge for the women of this province and it is something we must all work together to try and prevent.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I rise in the House today to report that the first Ontario Agriculture Week is officially underway.

In my riding of Perth county, events kicked off on Sunday with a "breakfast in the country" at the home of Bob and Marilyn French. This was followed by harvest day tours which were arranged by Barb Quarry and the Stratford tourism department to offer people the opportunity to see what real farm operations are like.

Here at Queen's Park the Honourable Noble Villeneuve and members of the Legislature were joined by representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Archives of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Royal Bank to assist me in unveiling Ontario Agriculture Week displays.

I would like to thank Ian Wilson and the staff of the Archives of Ontario for their hard work in putting together the display in the rotunda and for providing the historical evidence of the central role of agriculture in the development of this province.

On a historical note, John Deere invented the first chiselled plow in 1837. It's appropriate, therefore, that we find a display of John Deere farm machinery, provided by Nobleton Farm Services, outside Queen's Park. This highly successful exhibition is offering the people of Toronto and visitors to the Legislature a unique opportunity to view the tools used by today's farmers.

It's important to acknowledge the ongoing contribution of Ontario farmers to the quality of life of all our citizens. I invite everyone to partake and to participate in the celebration of agriculture in Ontario.

HURRICANE GEORGES

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): Hurricane Georges has brought about one of the worst kinds of devastation in the areas it has visited. Millions of people were forced to flee their homes and take refuge in shelters. This hurricane had a phenomenal economic impact in the areas hit. The residents were forced to run for their lives leaving behind their lifetime savings and investment in property. The savage and brutal Georges has left massive destruction caused by the winds and heavy rains in many areas.

Dr Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister of St Kitts, told me that the islands were severely hit. Over 80% of homes were damaged and 20% of the homes experienced total destruction. The walls of schools and shops crumbled and roofs were blown off the main hospital. Many islands have no electricity at all.

The hurricane killed over 375 people as the storm ripped through the Caribbean. It was reported that over 210 people in the Dominican Republic and 147 people in Haiti died. Also Cuba, Puerto Rico, Antigua and St Kitts and Nevis and southern states have been badly affected, reporting loss of lives. The fatality rate may go up as hundreds of people are still unaccounted for.

The overall damage has been estimated in billions as Hurricane Georges continues to cause chaos and havoc. I appeal to this government and to the citizens of our great province to provide all possible assistance to the victims of this disaster by contacting the Red Cross Society which is coordinating help to the region.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I rise today to add my voice to those today who have raised the concern about school closings in the Hamilton-Wentworth area.

The front page of the Hamilton Spectator today says: "Schools Slated to Close" and "Up to 15 public schools will be declared surplus." Also this morning, Ray Mulholland, chair of the Hamilton-Wentworth school board, was on 900 CHML, the Roy Green show, talking about the impact on our broader community.

I want to speak about the specific difficulties and, quite frankly, personal disasters this will create in the inner city of Hamilton, the area I represent. The government should know that this is a part of the city that already has an awful lot of people who are facing many personal challenges. Many disabled individuals live there; people who are low-income; a lot of seniors live in this area.

The fact of the matter is that the closure of these inner-city schools affects the quality of life of the children in particular, but of the people who live in those immediate areas. This government's taking of \$5 billion to \$6 billion out of revenue is \$5 billion or \$6 billion that should have gone back in to be invested in our school system and our hospitals. Instead you're using that money to buy off your wealthy friends. It's disgusting.

JIM BISHOP

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): Morley Kells, the MPP for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, and myself recently lost a friend and a constituent. It was an untimely death of a remarkable individual, Jim Bishop. Jim Bishop, also known as Mr Lacrosse, died on September 7 as a result of injuries sustained in an automobile accident north of Bowmanville.

Jim was the founder of the Oshawa Green Gaels, a Junior A lacrosse team. An instructional coach, he led his team to an unprecedented seven straight Minto Cup championships in the 1960s. He was elected as a member of the Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame, owner of Lacrosse International, coach of two professional Canadian lacrosse teams and involved with the Whitby Warriors in 1997 for their championship.

Jim was also involved in professional hockey and served as vice-president of the Detroit Red Wings.

Jim Bishop leaves with us a legacy, not just in Durham but across Ontario and indeed Canada. Stan Cockerton, executive director of the Ontario Lacrosse Association, said, "I don't think there's been any person in the past 100 years who's had the kind of impact Jim's had on lacrosse."

Impressive as Jim Bishop's resumé may be as a coach, manager and executive member of many successful teams, Jim had a personal touch and has had many close friendships with his team players as well.

Jim Bishop, coach, teacher and mentor, will be missed. I would especially like to send my condolences to Jim's family: Jim, Colleen, Ann, Craig, Joe and Gael, as well as the grandchildren, Jacob and Jordan. The memory and the spirit of Jim Bishop will live on through all he has touched and all those he has touched in this province.

1340

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Speaker, as you're aware, the Harris health services destruction commission has closed one of our hospitals in Kingston. The Hotel Dieu has been serving Kingston and area residents for 153 years. Make no mistake, it's Mike Harris who told the sisters that their services were no longer required. Where are the patients served by the sisters to go?

To top it off, our community care access centre has now cut 2,000 patients from homemaking services because of lack of adequate funding. How are the elderly, the handicapped and the early discharged patients from hospitals to receive the home care assistance they need?

Last Thursday in this House we saw the Minister of Health and the entire Tory caucus vote against our private member's resolution that would ensure adequate funding for hospitals and ensure that adequate community resources are in place for those who need care in communities.

How does this government justify underfunding our community access centre and closing our hospitals at the same time? Some \$52 million in health care has been taken out of our area and only \$36 million reinvested, and no new dollars for home care services.

The residents of Kingston and area know the value of the services provided by the sisters. Over 60,000 people in Kingston have signed petitions to tell the Premier and his destruction commission to leave our hospitals alone. Here are over 60,000 signatures for the Minister of Health. Stop taking money away from health care in Kingston and Ontario.

BREAST CANCER

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): October is Breast Cancer Month. More and more women are now being diagnosed with breast cancer every year; in fact, it's now up to one out of nine. I expect every member in this House has had a friend, a sister, a mother, a wife, a cousin diagnosed with this terrible disease.

In my riding of Riverdale a self-help centre for women, called Willow, is an amazing organization which reaches out and helps women and their families across the province deal with this once the woman has been diagnosed. Volunteers, women who are survivors of breast cancer, come in to help out and talk to newly diagnosed women on the phone.

Today I want to urge the federal Minister of Health, Allan Rock, to reconsider his answer of no to Willow for funding. The federal Liberal government set aside millions of dollars for cancer research and cancer care and denied Willow, which is a wonderful centre — and I think everybody here knows about it.

I know, Mr Speaker, that you were part of a table sponsored at the Willow fundraising dinner. It's a wonderful centre that is becoming world-renowned, and the federal Liberal government said no to funding. I'm sure every member will join with me today in urging the federal government to reconsider.

PUMPKINFEST

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): It gives me great pleasure today to share with my colleagues an outstanding event which I attended in the riding of Bruce over the past weekend.

The 12th annual Pumpkinfest was held in the town of Port Elgin. This is a world championship event which involves a weigh-off competition for the heaviest pumpkin.

This year the prize-winning pumpkin weighed in at 1,092 pounds, a world record. It was grown by Gary Burke, of Simcoe, Ontario, who has taken home over \$10,000 in prize money. Weighing in at a close second was a 1,010-pounder grown by Bob and Elaine MacKenzie, of Tiverton, Ontario.

Pumpkinfest is a community-wide event featuring activities for the whole family. These include an enormous

antique car show, artists' village and craft show, farm machinery show, dances and concerts. Some of the more unique events are seed-spitting contests, underwater pumpkin carving and a giant vegetable weigh-off competition.

Port Elgin, a town of 7,000 people on the shores of Lake Huron, attracted over 50,000 people to Pumpkinfest.

Special recognition should be given to Cathy Mills, Pumpkinfest chairperson, and Jan Bonhomme, Pumpkinfest coordinator, as well as the hundreds of volunteers, for the outstanding contribution they have made to make this event possible. Many businesses and organizations also provided donations of time, equipment and money.

I congratulate the people of Port Elgin on an extremely successful 12th annual Pumpkinfest. It was a pleasure to attend and take part in a community festival which has grown to become one of the most popular in southwestern Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LEGAL AID SERVICES ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998

SUR LES SERVICES D'AIDE JURIDIQUE

Mr Harnick moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 68, An Act to incorporate Legal Aid Ontario and to create the framework for the provision of legal aid services in Ontario, to amend the Legal Aid Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 68, Loi constituant en personne morale Aide juridique Ontario, établissant le cadre de la prestation des services d'aide juridique en Ontario, modifiant la Loi sur l'aide juridique et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The Legal Aid Services Act proposes a new organization, Legal Aid Ontario, to deliver legal aid services.

This organization will develop new and innovative ways to better provide legal aid services, will operate independently from government and will be clearly accountable for the use of public funds.

The act is our next step in building on Professor John McCamus's review of the province's legal aid system which set out the blueprint for the creation of a new model that would more effectively respond to the needs of Ontarians.

I'd like to thank Professor McCamus, who is in the gallery today, and his committee for their hard work, and I would also like to thank Nancy Austin of the Ministry of the Attorney General for her hard work and dedication in implementing this project.

INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER
AND LOBBYISTS STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 CONCERNANT
LE COMMISSAIRE À L'INTÉGRITÉ
ET LES LOBBYISTES

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr Hodgson moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 69, An Act to amend the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 and to enact the Lobbyist Registration Act, 1998 /
Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur
l'intégrité des députés et édictant la Loi de 1998 sur
l'enregistrement des lobbyistes.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): This government made a commitment to introduce legislation that would make lobbying activities more transparent and accountable to the public. We are moving forward on that promise today. We are introducing legislation that will require lobbyists to register their identity, the names of their clients and to declare their lobbying activities on a government registry. This registry will be accessible to the public. A Web site will be created to allow on-line registration by lobbyists and viewing by the public.

Not only are we the first Ontario government to take this initiative, we are the first provincial government in Canada to do so.

This legislation supports our commitment to ensure government activities are conducted openly, fairly and transparently while protecting the government from undue influence. Lobbying is part of the government process. This legislation assures the public interest —

The Speaker: I think you're into debate now. I think we've got a pretty good idea of what the bill is going to do.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I ask for unanimous consent to allow for a response to the minister's statement on this bill.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to have a response to the introduction of the bill? Agreed? No.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that notwithstanding standing order 95(g), requirement for notice be waived with respect to private member's ballot item number 27.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I rise today to speak about an opportunity to create jobs, about an opportunity to help young people to get a job, an opportunity to allow our businesses to create more jobs and an opportunity to help our economy keep the jobs that we already enjoy.

Today I want to address a situation that I believe is detrimental to these opportunities for Ontario workers and for our small business owners in particular. For too long the federal Liberal government has been using employment insurance to siphon money away from Ontario workers and businesses and use it for purposes other than for which it was intended.

My colleagues and I have serious concerns about reports that the federal government is now considering legislation to expand and legalize this practice. Reportedly Prime Minister Chrétien, Finance Minister Paul Martin and the rest of the federal Liberal cabinet are considering ways to legalize the use of the employment insurance surplus, a surplus built solely from contributions made by hard-working women and men, and to use those funds for their own political purposes.

We've all heard about their grand plans. While we applaud Mr Chrétien and Mr Martin for finally agreeing with our government's fundamental belief that tax cuts are imperative to the continuing growth of our economy, we strongly object to any suggestion that the federal government use money which is not rightly theirs for any purpose other than providing benefits for workers, for the unemployed, for increasing those benefits or for increasing opportunities for work or training, or returning the money through employment insurance payroll tax cuts to the workers who made in the contributions in the first place. This is not only fair to the workers but it makes good economic sense. It will create new jobs and it will help keep the jobs that Ontarians already have. The surplus of employment insurance funds rightly belongs to the workers of this country who paid into it, far in excess of what was needed.

Ontarians annually contribute \$4.5 billion more to the employment insurance account than is actually spent on employment insurance. In 1997, Ontarians paid a total of about \$8 billion in premium taxes but got back less than \$3.5 billion in benefits. In fact since 1994, Ontario workers and businesses have paid for about two thirds of the accumulated \$19-billion surplus.

All premiers and territorial leaders agreed at their meeting this summer that EI premiums should be reduced for all workers and eliminated entirely for young Canadians. Liberal premiers, NDP premiers and Conservative premiers all agreed. This move could create as many as

200,000 new jobs across the country. A great many of these jobs would be created here in Ontario, the industrial heartland of this nation.

Ontario has consistently pushed for a reduction in premiums to \$2.20 per \$100 of insurable earnings from the current \$2.70, back, I might add, to the level they were at before the federal Liberals massively hiked these premium taxes on our workers.

The most respected actuaries have told us that this would be quite enough to keep the fund solvent through the ups and downs of the employment cycle. In fact, according to recent reports, the employment insurance chief actuary's report dated September 10 indicates the employment insurance account will have a surplus of \$7.1 billion for 1998 alone. This means that premium rates could have been set at \$1.81 in 1998, one third lower than the actual level of \$2.70, and the account would still run on a break-even basis this year. Even the employment insurance chief actuary has been quoted recently as saying that a steady premium rate between \$1.90 and \$2.10 would be sustainable even in the event of an economic downturn.

The provinces have moreover asked that the EI account be removed from Ottawa's budgetary books and externally managed in the same manner as the Canada pension plan. Today I understand all four opposition parties at the federal level endorse a similar plan. Think about that: the Reform Party united with the NDP and the other two parties nationally, calling on the government to do exactly this. Hopefully, we might be able to have the same three-party unanimity here.

The provinces have moreover asked — sorry, I said that. I was pretty excited about all four parties agreeing.

Clearly, such action would improve the fiscal integrity of the program. On September 25 my colleague the Minister of Finance, Ernie Eves, wrote Paul Martin to convey the province's most serious concern about the federal plan to take over the EI account. His request was simple: He urged Mr Martin to have any plan to change the administrative responsibility for the EI account on the agenda of the upcoming federal-provincial finance ministers' meeting on October 22 in Winnipeg. This must be done. On behalf of Ontario workers, I've also written to the Prime Minister today to make the same request.

Our provincial income tax cut was the single-largest job-creating stimulus by any government in the history of this country. Tax cuts create jobs. The Ontario economy has created over 300,000 jobs since 1995. On behalf of those still unemployed in Ontario and those worried about keeping their jobs, I urge the federal government to reduce employment insurance premiums, and eliminate them entirely for young Canadians.

Today I am asking all members of this House who want to see more jobs made available to Ontario workers to speak up. I'm asking them to tell the Liberal government and all 101 federal Liberal MPs in Ontario that they must resist this urge to take what is not theirs from the workers of this province. We must urge them in the strongest possible terms to follow the advice of the chief actuary

and lower premiums. We must band together and demand that Ottawa make the employment insurance fund more accountable to the workers and the employers who pay into it. Let us demand premiums be realistically linked to the cost of providing benefits and training programs to Canadian workers, as they would be in a genuine insurance scheme.

On behalf of those who work in this province, all those who pay into the employment insurance program, together I believe we must ask this to be done.

1400

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Responses?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to respond to the Premier's —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Reset the clock. Member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: I'm pleased to respond to the Premier's comments on employment. I think the people of Ontario appreciate the challenge we face on the employment front. I just received, September 21, from the Ministry of Finance the latest employment numbers. It says, Premier, as you know, that Ontario's employment declined in August; Ontario lost 19,900 full-time jobs in the month of August; Ontario since April has lost 22,000 jobs; the rest of Canada has gained 42,000 jobs.

While I would like to be more optimistic on the employment front, for the last four to five months Ontario's employment has been extremely weak. In fact, I remember well the Common Sense Revolution where Mike Harris said, and this was categorical, this was not —

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Does it have anything to do with EI premiums?

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: This plan — well, they want to talk about jobs but they don't want to hear the numbers.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Hold on. Government members —

Hon Mr Eves: You agree the workers should be ripped off, do you?

The Speaker: Would the Minister of Finance come to order. Minister of Finance and members of the government, I think they were reasonably quiet while the Premier gave his speech. I'm asking the same from the government members as well.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I say to the member for York-Mackenzie, I don't tell you how to answer the questions; I'm not going to tell him how to ask them etc. So they can respond to whatever they choose to respond to.

Mr Phillips: We're talking about employment and it was you, Premier, who said in your own Common Sense Revolution, "This plan will create more than 725,000 new jobs over the next five years," and it's you who put out this document — this is from your own Minister of Finance — that says we have lost almost 20,000 jobs in the month of August. So I say we do have an employment problem in Ontario.

Your comments were about youth. It was you, Premier — and this is your own document. Your tax cut gave a tax break worth \$500 million to people in this province who are making more than a quarter of a million dollars a year. The people in Ontario who are making more than a quarter of a million dollars a year got \$500 million of tax break. I say to the young people who are watching you about jobs, why was that possible, how is it possible? You know you have been facing over the last three years a 60% increase in your tuition fees, so we're here today to talk about young people and jobs.

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: What have you done? You have taken their tuition fees up 60%; in the month of August we have lost 19,900 jobs. You may not want to hear this, and I think the public will understand that the Conservatives are barracking, but what has happened —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: The thrust of the Premier's comments were around young people and employment for young people. I want to set the stage to say that, Premier, you now are I think 128,000 jobs short of your target. You have taken tuition fees up 60% for young people. You have given a tax break to people who are making more than a quarter of a million dollars a year, which represents a \$500-million tax break

Yes, put it on the agenda. Discuss this federally. Absolutely do that. That's great. But I would say we have a lot to do in these four walls. We have a lot to do to point out to the people of Ontario what is happening in employment and how you have been treating young people, the things you have 100% control over. You have taken tuition fees up 60%. You have given the people in Ontario making more than a quarter of a million dollars a tax break that is worth \$500 million. You promised in the Common Sense Revolution, with your picture on the front — you never said, "We think that this plan will create a climate where 725,000 jobs are created." You said, "This plan will create 725,000 jobs."

I say to the people of Ontario that we now are seeing an enormous softness in job creation in the province, and so I understand the Premier now wanting to deflect the criticism.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: The Minister of Industry doesn't want to hear this either, but he's going to have to hear it, because the people of Ontario are seeing it. The Premier now wants to deflect the problem somewhere else. But, Premier, it is you who will be held accountable for employment in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'll warn the Minister of Finance to come to order as well. I'm not warning you again; if I do, I'll name you.

Member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: I repeat, in the Premier's statement we have absolutely no difficulty. Get it on the agenda and

discuss it federally. But let's get on the agenda here in Ontario the other issues, your tuition fees that are costing our young people opportunity and a future, your tax break which is giving a \$500-million tax break to those who are making more than a quarter of a million dollars, and the employment numbers that now show that in the last five months the rest of Canada has gained 42,000 jobs and Ontario has lost 22,000 jobs. Let's also have that debate here in this Legislature.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I'm pleased to be able to say a few words about this very important issue today. You'll know, Speaker, that we wanted to get unanimous consent so we could talk about this important issue last week. Certain members of the Legislature turned us down on that unanimous consent, so I'm pleased to be able to speak about it today.

This is an incredibly important issue for people in Ontario and for people across Canada. The reality is that there are some 800,000 people now in Canada who are unemployed, who are out of work, yet are not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. They are not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits because the current Liberal government in Ottawa changed the unemployment insurance legislation to take those benefits away from them. People who are vulnerable, people who are poor, people who have lost their jobs have had money taken out of their pockets through the employment insurance fund, and then the current Liberal government has said to them: "You're not eligible for income supplements to tide you over. You're not eligible for job relocation. You're not eligible for some of the training funds that are part of this."

This is a terrible situation, that so many people in this province and so many people in this country are unemployed and not only has the federal government abandoned them but they're going to take their money and use it to finance an income tax scheme that I am sure at the end of the day will benefit those at the top of the income ladder far more than anyone else. It is a terrible injustice.

I want to be very clear on what I believe needs to happen here. First of all, those people who have been unjustly deprived of unemployment insurance benefits must have those benefits restored. It is only just and it is only fair. Second of all, as I read a lot of the current economic commentary, the World Bank released a report just two days ago which says that the key to this economy, the key to people being able to take part in this economy, is education and training. They implore all countries in the world, all jurisdictions in the world, to invest more in education and training. Those UI funds must be used to re-equip workers so they can re-enter the workforce, not fund an income tax scheme that at the end of the day only puts more money in the pockets of people who already have a lot of money.

1410

I couldn't help but notice the spokesperson for the Liberal Party condemning the Harris income tax scheme. I want to be clear that I do not approve in any way of the

Harris income tax scheme, because at the end of the day people in Ontario are losing health care, losing education opportunities and their property taxes are being forced up in order that the wealthiest people in this province can receive the benefits of an income tax scheme.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Just like they did under your government. Don't start with that. Remember the winter of 93, Howie? See what you did to our hospitals in 93.

Mr Hampton: Sorry, Speaker. Some of the Liberals appear to be upset here.

Mrs Pupatello: You're no better than they are.

The Speaker: Windsor-Sandwich, come to order. I'm not going to warn you.

Mr Hampton: The problem the Liberal Party has is that they want to condemn the Harris income tax scheme, but they admit when you push them that they would institutionalize and they would cement that income tax scheme, that they would continue to take money out of health care and education to finance that income tax scheme. Now we have the federal Liberal government saying that they want to do the same thing, only they want to take money out of the pockets of the unemployed to finance an income tax scheme.

What is evident here is that neither the Harris government in Ontario nor the federal Liberal government in Ottawa has an employment strategy. Neither government has a strategy to take unemployed workers and give them the training they need to put them back to work.

On a point of order, Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario formally opposes any move by the federal Liberal government to spend the employment insurance surplus, the vast majority of which comes from Ontario workers and employers, on federal income tax cuts.

I seek unanimous consent for that motion so we can send that motion to Jean Chrétien, the Prime Minister of Canada.

The Speaker: Let me be clear so that the House understands: The leader of the third party is asking for unanimous consent to move that motion. Agreed? No.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Dominic Agostino said no.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): He's not in his seat.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I heard a no. That's all that matters.

Mr Christopherson: Speaker, a point of order.

The Speaker: First I just want to tell the members that I heard a no. I don't necessarily even know where it came from, but I know for certain that it didn't come from the gallery.

Member for Hamilton Centre, now your point of order.

Mr Christopherson: Speaker, the no came from the member for Hamilton East, but he's not in his seat. I'd like to know whether you formally recognize that.

The Speaker: The fact is that it just doesn't matter. I heard a no.

It's now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. I want to give you an opportunity today to explain your position to this House on gun control. We both know that the majority of Ontarians support gun control, and so do I. We favour the registration of all guns. If you live in Ontario and you own a gun, I want that gun registered and I want the police to know about it. The police think this is a good idea and so do the victim support groups, including CAVEAT, chaired by Priscilla de Villiers. What I want to know from you today is your position on the registration of guns by all Ontarians who happen to own one in this province, a move supported by the police.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Solicitor General has spoken out on behalf of our party and our caucus and I refer it to him.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): Come on, Premier, answer the question.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Oakwood.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): This government does support gun control, real and meaningful and effective gun control. The federal government's legislation as it relates to registration of long guns in our view is in no way, shape or form an effective way of gun control. We've indicated and the Court of Appeal in Alberta has indicated clearly with a division that there are strong concerns with respect to the intervention of the federal government in provincial jurisdictions. That's one element of this.

The other concern from our perspective is the fact that we're dealing with a situation related to scarce resources in the public safety sector across this country. We believe you should be setting priorities and funding programs that are going to have the most impact on fighting crime in our country and getting guns off our streets and out of our neighbourhoods. If you use the example of the program this government has instituted, where we're spending \$150 million over five years to put 1,000 new police officers on the streets of Ontario, that's what we're doing with taxpayers' dollars.

Mr McGuinty: I can understand why the Premier ducked the question and I can understand why the minister is trying to complicate a very straightforward issue.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Leader of the official opposition.

1420

Mr McGuinty: The issue here is very straightforward. Either you believe that if you own a gun in the province of Ontario it ought to be registered and the police put on notice of that fact, or you don't. The police happen to believe it's a good idea. They feel it's going to make our province safer. They feel it's important for them to know

when they approach a certain house that there's a gun located inside that house. I think it's a good idea for guns in Ontario to be registered so our police are made aware of that fact. All I want to know from you is, do you think it's a good idea?

Hon Mr Runciman: I've indicated earlier that the idea of registration in and of itself may not necessarily be bad. There are two elements to this. This is a decision and a responsibility that should be left in the hands of provincial governments and territorial governments, not the federal government. It's an additional intrusion.

The other element is priorities and where you spend your money in a most effective way in terms of fighting crime across this country and getting weapons off our streets. We have a very serious problem with weapons being smuggled into this country. We have problems in terms of handguns, which are already required to be registered under the Criminal Code. This is not going to in any way have an impact on getting guns out of the hands of criminals. Criminals simply will not register their weapons; that's a proven fact.

The other reality in this is that the federal government has up to this point in time spent \$134 million on this program and they have not registered one single gun.

Mr McGuinty: Let me tell you how out of sync you are with Ontarians on this issue. Not only do you not appreciate how important it is to them to have every, single gun in this province registered, but where do you come out with this crazy idea of deciding that it's in the interests of our children to give them the right to bear arms? It's one thing to give them computers, it's another thing to give them school books, and in many, many cases it would be very important that we put food into their hands, but where do you come up with this hare-brained scheme to put guns in the hands of 12-year-olds? Ontarians want to know that.

I've been to the 905 area of this province and they're very concerned about this plan on your part —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Can I have some order, please. I appreciate the fact that you all want to answer, but the Solicitor General will answer the question.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, quite simply tell me: Why is it in the interests of children in Ontario that they be given the right to carry a gun and to shoot it?

Hon Mr Runciman: A couple of things: You talk about being out of sync. This is a leader who would not even get up and stand today with respect to the employment insurance fund.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Solicitor General.

Hon Mr Runciman: The member raised C-68 and then talks about 12-year-olds. The reality is that this is a component of C-68, allowing 12-year-olds to discharge weapons. The Ontario government has responded in a very appropriate way by ensuring that they take the appropriate hunter safety courses. They have to pass those. They have to have an adult with them who has to be at arm's length

and they share a long gun. Ontario is clearly doing what is appropriate to deal with the federal legislation, Bill C-68.

In respect to the other matter, the \$134 million that has been spent so far, if we had that money in Ontario — as I indicated earlier, we're spending \$150 million to put 1,000 new police officers on the streets of this province — we could double that. Ask the leader of the Liberal Party if Ontario residents would rather have another 2,000 police officers out on their streets versus registration which will have no impact whatsoever on crime in this country.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. I want to talk to you today about seven-year-old Randall Dooley. Young Randall's body was found a little over a week ago, shortly after he died. An autopsy showed he died of head wounds and there were signs of extensive earlier injuries. It was obvious that he had been badly beaten and abused.

For quite some time now you've been promising tough legislation to help prevent this sort of thing from happening again. I've been asking you for that legislation for over a year now. Everyone in this House, I am convinced, would support that kind of legislation. When are we going to see that legislation, Premier?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I would like to remind the leader that we all share a great deal of sympathy and concern when incidents like this happen. Clearly what happened, while I can't talk to the individual case, I don't think is anything that would be within the legislation; it would be contra to the legislation. So passing new legislation that could be broken would not, in my view, have prevented this situation to which the member refers.

As far as taking steps to reinforce the children's aid societies, we have taken a lot of measures already. In addition, as you know, we are planning on new legislation to give them even more support in general terms, but we've had more funding for children's aid societies, we've had a standardized approach to risk assessment, we've provided more training for child care workers —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, I'm not sure if I understood you correctly. Do you understand that we have it within our means to provide at least some kind of help to children who are growing up at risk in Ontario? We can do that in this Legislature. Your minister has been talking about that kind of legislation for a long time now.

I put forward a plan. It's called First Steps. There are 41 substantive recommendations in here. It's based on coroner's inquests. It's based on the child mortality task force. Imagine. We had a task force in Ontario to look into why our kids were being killed. The ideas are here. We have the recommendations. The juries are in.

My question again is, when are we going to see the legislation?

Hon Mr Harris: If you're talking now about legislation in response to the inquests, that legislation has been committed to by the minister. We have been consulting, as you are probably very much aware. In fact, even though there are incidents which we all regret and wish would not have happened, this legislation, when it comes in I believe this fall, will be the first legislation brought in in 10 years. You did nothing for five years; the New Democratic Party did not bring in any strengthening in five years.

This government has made a commitment to bring in new legislation and has made a commitment to consult on it. The minister has been doing that, and as soon as that is completed and the legislation ready, we would expect it in this House this fall.

1430

Mr McGuinty: I have raised these kinds of issues and these kinds of horrific stories time and time again. Here are some of the names: Kasandra Shepherd, Shanay Johnson, Johnny James, Tiffani Colville, Paolo Trotta, Sarah Podniewicz, and now Randall Dooley, all dead children, all died in Ontario, all were the subject of abuse and/or neglect.

I'm going to put an offer on the table here. I will do whatever it takes to help facilitate the passage of legislation to protect our children in this province. I'm asking you to make sure we can pass it completely — first, second and third reading — prior to the end of this fall session. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Harris: I appreciate the offer. If that stands with all members of the Legislature when the legislation is introduced this fall, there's no reason why it could not pass first, second and third reading. I appreciate your blind confidence in us, without having seen the legislation that you'll be 100% supportive, something that actually is the first good judgment I've ever heard come from you in your term as leader of the party. You should have confidence that this party that has massively —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Essex South, come to order.

Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: You have a right to have confidence in this party above any other party over the last 15 years in Ontario. This is the party that has given an additional \$170 million in the last budget, thanks to the Minister of Finance, towards increasing the number of child protection staff, providing better training for front-line workers, revitalizing foster care. This is the party that committed to bring in new legislation and has been consulting on that. In addition to your offer today of first, second and third reading before Christmas, which I accept very much, I also want to ask you to consider and uphold your commitment in First Steps, the introductory letter —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to introduce the member-elect for the riding of Nickel Belt, Mr Blain Morin, who's here in the gallery today.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. After the first year of your government's cuts to hospitals, Ontario hospitals were left with deficits —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Member for Sudbury, come to order.

Mr Hampton: After the first year of your government's cuts to hospitals, hospitals in this province were left with deficits of \$150 million. As you've continued to cut hospital budgets, hospitals have been forced to borrow from the banks in order to provide a level of service for their communities. This means that health care dollars that are supposed to be used to hire nurses and keep emergency rooms open are being used to pay financing charges and interest charges to banks, are being used to finance your income tax scheme.

The exact number for this year's hospital debt will depend upon the funding you provide those hospitals. What's your answer? Are you going to provide hospitals with enough money so they don't have to go deeper into debt to finance your income tax scheme?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): First of all, we need to make it absolutely clear that there have been no reductions whatsoever to the hospital base funding allocations this year. In fact, we have not shifted any money to pay for any tax cuts from health. When you left office in 1995, the health budget stood at \$17.4 billion. Today we are spending on health services for the people in this province at least \$18.6 billion, and we are doing so in a way that we are strengthening the services that are available. We are providing a continuum of care. We are restructuring our system in order that we can respond to the changing needs of our population and provide the services as close to the homes of people as possible at every stage of their life.

Mr Hampton: The minister says she's not cutting hospital budgets this year. What she meant to say was that she didn't announce that she's cutting their budgets. In fact, you're cutting their budgets through the back door. You're forcing them to pay internally for increases in nurses' wages, increases that are long overdue. You're forcing them to absorb OHIP technical fees.

What it amounts to is this: You've cut hospital budgets by over \$1 billion. To compensate, they're having to do a number of things: They're having to go to the bank and borrow money, which is wrong; they're having to push patients out the door quicker and sicker, which is wrong; they're having to cut services, which is wrong; and they're having to impose all kinds of user fees, which is wrong — all imposed by your government. For example, in Sault Ste Marie the two hospitals have been cut a total of \$6.4 million over the first two years of your government. This year they'll have a deficit of \$2.5 million because of other cuts they're absorbing.

Minister, are you going to continue to put our hospitals between a rock and a hard place while you finance your income tax scheme?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I can tell the leader of the third party what we're not prepared to do, and I read from the *Ottawa Citizen* of March 19, 1994 — "As financially squeezed hospitals search for ways to slash costs, patients are being moved through faster. Seniors who undergo total hip replacements who once spent 10 days in hospital now go home in three. Heart patients are being discharged after five days instead of nine." This is in financially squeezed hospitals.

Then it goes on to say in the *Toronto Star* in 1991: "Toronto East General Hospital cut 70 beds" today, "including 19...children's...and 17 maternity...to help wipe out a projected \$4.3-million deficit. As well" — look at this — "83 nurses will lose their jobs by fall."

I can assure the people in this province that what we are doing is ensuring that we have a health system of which we can all be proud —

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr Hampton: Minister, I want to remind you of a situation in Sault Ste Marie where a patient lost his right thumb. He wrote a letter to you about that. In his letter he points out that this man and his doctor believe that if it hadn't been for an eight-hour wait for the operating room, he would not have lost his right thumb.

What do you have to say about what is happening with these kinds of situations in Sault Ste Marie and in other hospitals across the province, where you continue to cut hospital budgets in order to finance your income tax scheme, where you continue to take money away from patients, away from nurses in order to finance your income tax scheme? You've taken \$1 billion out of hospital budgets already. What do you say to this man in Sault Ste Marie? What do you say to those hospitals? Are you going to force them further into debt this year in order to finance your income tax scheme?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'm pleased to say that as a result of the income tax reduction, actually revenues are up in this province and we can provide more services to people. That's what has enabled us to continue to increase the spending on health care each year.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My second question is for the Minister of Education. I want to send over to the Minister of Education this map and a list of schools that he wants to close across the province.

The minister pretends that he's not doing this. He pretends that the boards of education have free choice. He conveniently confuses the fact, though, that boards of education will not get money to fund new accommodation unless they close schools that have any surplus space. It's your funding formula that is forcing these boards to close schools.

Minister, what you don't seem to realize is that you're cutting the heart out of a number of these communities. You are literally cutting the heart out of them because when the community school goes, the community starts to deteriorate as well.

This is the map that you've got, Minister, and it shows the number of locations across southern Ontario where schools are going to be forced to close because of your funding formula.

1440

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I guess the member opposite could show a map of the 106 schools that were closed by school boards when the NDP was in power between 1990 and 1995. These are decisions made by school boards. They were made by school boards when the Liberals were in power, made by school boards when the NDP was in power, made by school boards when we are in power. There are shifts in population, shifts in enrolment; schools are opened, schools are closed. In the month of September, 20 schools were opened in Ontario, and there'll be another five schools opened over the next month or two.

The funding formula that we have brought forward — some \$800 million in school construction within the next year, \$1.5 billion of school construction over the next three years — will result in almost 200 new schools in Ontario where they're needed, supporting some 120,000 students where those students need the support.

Mr Hampton: The minister conveniently tries to leave out two facts: First, the financing of the schools that you're now opening was approved under the Bob Rae government. You have not approved the financing of one new school in this province. Second, what you fail to point out is, yes, we have had school closures in this province before, but those schools have closed when the enrolment has dropped so low that a local decision has been made that we should not continue to have this school. What you're doing is taking so much money out of the school system that schools will be forced to close not because of enrolment but because you've taken the money.

Minister, these are just some of the schools across southern Ontario: 200 here in Toronto, a number in Kitchener and Waterloo, a number in Hamilton, a number in the Niagara Peninsula. The point is you are taking a vital community service out of the community. Don't you recognize this is wrong? Don't you recognize how destructive —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon David Johnson: The leader of the third party doesn't have a very high degree of confidence in parents and school boards. Parents and school boards, the communities and the school boards, are making these decisions. Here in the city of Toronto there are about 80 schools which are no longer used for public purposes. Some of them are empty; some are used for administration; some are used for storage; some have been leased to third parties for other use.

The taxpayer might consider that a better use could be made of those 80 properties that are no longer used for

public school purposes. These are the kinds of decisions that school boards, in conjunction with their communities, with their parents, are making across Ontario as they did when the NDP was in power, as they did when the Liberals were in power.

Mr Hampton: This is what's happening. This is creating such a crisis that, for example, here in the city of Toronto it is not just the board of education, it is also the city council that is looking at this issue. What they've done wisely over the years is they have put either adjacent to or into those schools swimming pools, athletic facilities, day care centres and a host of other community services which means that the school truly is the focal point of the community. In Kitchener the Courtland Avenue senior school is on the auction block. It is a downtown school that not only houses more than 300 students but is used seven days a week by a wide variety of community groups.

Minister, it's you and your government funding formula that is going to tear the heart out of these communities because those boards know that you're forcing them to close those schools. If they don't close those schools, you will not give them any of the monies they may need to build school accommodation elsewhere in their district. You're tearing the heart out of schools to finance your income tax scheme. Minister, will you reconsider this? Will you put the heart back into our community?

Hon Mr Johnson: Of course that's absolute nonsense. I encourage municipalities to be involved. If municipalities have community centres, if there are meeting rooms, if there is playground equipment or whatever, I encourage municipalities. Having come from the municipal scene, I know those kinds of activities and functions are important to municipalities, and municipalities should be involved and they should make decisions which reflect the needs of their citizens.

But I say to the leader of the third party that the Ministry of Education needs to focus the monies it has to educate the students in the classroom, and that's exactly what this government has done: more monies for teachers, more monies for textbooks, more monies for para-professionals and librarians and guidance teachers. That's what this government has put the priority on, priority on the classroom to improve the quality of education in Ontario.

The Speaker: New question.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Minister of Education. You are being completely irresponsible in trying to deny that it is your funding cuts that are forcing the closure of schools, and you are being irresponsible as a government in not recognizing and dealing with the impact those school closures will have on communities.

Minister, you cut the funding to maintain what you called extra space on September 1 of this year. The school boards wrote to you. They said, "Please maintain our funding until we can actually close the schools that you're

insisting that we close," and you said no. So you cut their funding for maintaining what you called extra spaces on September 1 of this year. You cut \$57 million out of the budget of the Toronto board, and now Toronto council is worried about the closure of as many as 200 schools. Up in Huron and Perth counties you cut at least \$2 million out of their budget, and now the Avon Maitland board is facing the closure of as many as 14 schools. If you aren't forcing the closure of schools, why did you cut the maintenance budgets of those boards on September 1?

Hon David Johnson: There was an October Toronto Star article that has to do, actually, with the Timiskaming Board of Education. The Timiskaming board has had to close a high school and it blames the problem on lack of provincial funding from the education ministry. The Toronto Star article is dated October 14, 1988. It said they had no alternative but to close because the Ministry of Education didn't give enough money.

These are the kinds of decisions that boards have had to make down through the years. Boards have made these decisions under the Liberal government, boards have made these decisions under the NDP government. Take the Toronto Board of Education as an example. There will be more money spent in the Toronto Board of Education this year than last year in the Toronto Board of Education. Now, the responsibility is for the Toronto board to take that money and pay for the best possible education for the students in the Toronto system.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): Minister, your one-size-fits-all approach to education is creating chaos that verges on an emergency in rural Ontario as well. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture understands that your funding formula is driving school closures and ripping the heart out of rural communities. They are deeply concerned. They are working on a rural school policy. Will you listen to the OFA? Will you listen to the parents and the students of rural Ontario who demand that you fix your flawed funding formula immediately?

Hon David Johnson: You bet we listen to the parents, and I'll tell you what the parents and the teachers and the students want in the education system in Ontario. They want a higher quality, they want more discipline in the education system, and we're providing that higher quality through a new curriculum, through province-wide testing, through a standardized report card, through a cap on the average class size, through more instructional days for students so our students have a fair comparison with students from other provinces. And, I might say, we have more than doubled the amount of operation and maintenance monies for small schools in Ontario; a \$90-million commitment for remote and rural schools, more than double under the previous GLGs.

This is how we're focusing the monies, where they're needed, particularly into the classroom to improve the quality of education.

1450

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My next question is for the Premier. I want to raise with you a very important date: September 6, 1995. I think you should remember it well. It is the date upon which an innocent person was killed in this province. That's the day that Dudley George was shot and killed. He became the first aboriginal person this century to be killed in a land rights dispute in Canada.

Premier, we have a situation now where three years has gone by and your government has not called an inquiry into this event, despite our repeated calls.

The family of Dudley George and the community deserve to know what the events were that led to the death of this innocent man, how this could have been prevented. Premier, will you call this inquiry now?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Mr Speaker, I know the Attorney General —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Attorney General.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The government has been clear and consistent that it will not consider other options until all matters before the courts have been resolved. It would not be appropriate to launch a public inquiry while there are outstanding legal matters before the courts.

Mr Hampton: We've heard this excuse before, and these excuses are nothing but stonewalling.

I've got a report here from a very well respected law professor at the University of Toronto, Professor Patrick Macklem. He has looked at every single excuse, Premier, that you and your government have tried to use for not calling an inquiry, every single legal barrier you have tried to hide behind, and he says this: There is no legal barrier or logical reason why you cannot call a public inquiry.

Premier, you know that evidence has already been destroyed in the Ministry of the Solicitor General, evidence that would have been quite relevant to this inquiry.

I want to read further from this report. It says, "Given that both law and policy fully support the establishment of a public inquiry, the government of Ontario's continued refusal to hold an inquiry can only be explained in terms of politically motivated unwillingness."

The question is, why haven't you called an inquiry? There's no legal reason why. Call an inquiry today.

Hon Mr Harnick: As I indicated, there are currently two criminal appeals and three civil actions before the courts with respect to these matters. The government has been clear and consistent. It will only consider any options after all matters before the courts have been completed.

I've discussed this with senior officials. I've been advised it would be inappropriate to call a public inquiry at this time.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Last year this House focused considerable attention on the new city of Toronto. The government recognized that the overlap and duplication between Metropolitan Toronto and the area municipalities within it was increasingly not serving the taxpayers as effectively and efficiently as it could and should and that change was required and in fact was probably long overdue.

The new city of Toronto has now been in place for about nine months, and municipal government in Toronto is being streamlined, I think, better to serve all Torontonians. Minister, could you rise today and inform this House on the state of affairs of the new city of Toronto?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member for High Park-Swansea for that very excellent question. I can tell the member that the new city is working very well. By the way, they're not my words; that's a quote from the member for Fort York, as a matter of fact, at our estimates session the other day. I would like to point out that the member for Fort York is not the only person to think the new city is working well, and I'd also like to quote Mayor Lastman who recently told some of his neighbouring municipalities:

"It works and it works well. The province kept saying this, but I wasn't listening. I just wanted to keep my little turf. And I was wrong. I was wrong because this is going to work and it's going to work better and we're going to be able to offer better services as well."

We said that the Metro Toronto seven local governments becoming a single unified city would provide better services at lower cost to the taxpayers of the city of Toronto, and it has.

Mr Shea: I must say I am delighted —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Supplementary.

Mr Shea: I am delighted that the member for St Catharines is awake and is so exercised with my question. Let me continue because I want to go on to some more subtle nuances of that theme.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr Shea: The unification of the city of Toronto is a large undertaking which requires time and energy. I think all of us acknowledge that blending seven departments into one is not easy, whether it's public works, purchasing or planning. It's essential that appropriate consideration and time be given to make that plan work, but while restructuring ultimately results in more efficient and cost-effective government, I think you'll agree that there are some short-term costs associated with making the necessary changes.

Minister, will you rise in the House today and tell us what the government has done to recognize the transition challenges and what support it has given to the implementation of the new city of Toronto?

Hon Mr Leach: Again I thank the member for High Park-Swansea for that very excellent question. We indicated at the time we introduced the legislation to form the new unified city of Toronto that there should be savings in the order of perhaps \$300 million a year by getting rid of the overlap and duplication that existed in having seven governments operate in this one single area.

We also recognize that there are some costs incurred to get rid of overlap and duplication in the short term. As a result of that we agreed to fund the new unified city of Toronto with a \$50-million, one-time, upfront start-up cost to get rid of a lot of that duplication. They've done that. The budget chief of the city of Toronto has agreed that the \$300 million we said would be there in savings as a result of getting rid of the overlap and duplication is indeed there and is being found. They have found and identified the vast majority of that money already, and within three years —

The Speaker: New question.

1500

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My question is to the Minister of Health. Our health critic, Gerard Kennedy, has repeatedly proven how your reduction in hospital funding is negatively affecting patient care in Ontario. In fact, in Sudbury alone in the last month, you have slashed 30 beds and you have closed the emergency ward at the Sudbury Memorial Hospital. You promised, though, that this closure would enhance emergency care.

Let me talk to you for a moment about Mrs Brenda Rantala-Sykes. Last Saturday Mrs Rantala-Sykes spent 14 hours in the emergency ward at the St Joseph's Health Centre. She didn't see a doctor for six and a half hours and was confined to an emergency cubicle which was more than 80 degrees in temperature. After 12 hours of waiting and near total exhaustion, she passed out on the hospital floor unattended. She sustained injuries to her neck, face, jaw and her right eye required six stitches to close the cut she received from the fall. Minister, my question is, is Mrs Rantala-Sykes's experience your idea of enhanced emergency care?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): We know of course that in Sudbury, as elsewhere throughout Ontario, we have been increasing the spending when it comes to health care dollars. We know that in the Sudbury-Manitoulin area we have spent at least \$114.8 million beyond what you had indicated and we hope that everything is being done in order to ensure that the services required for patients are there for the patients.

Mr Bartolucci: Mrs Rantala-Sykes wants answers. The people of Sudbury want answers. Why did Mrs Rantala-Sykes have to spend 14 hours in an emergency ward? Why did she sustain injuries while she was there? Why did she leave the hospital sicker and more injured than when she went into the hospital? Why does Mrs Rantala-Sykes require the use and the services of a chiropractor? Why does Mrs Rantala-Sykes require the services of a plastic surgeon after her visit to the

emergency ward? Why has Mrs Rantala-Sykes missed a week of work? Why can't Mrs Rantala-Sykes operate as a normal mother and parent? Because of dizziness, because of spells she is now suffering because of her visit to the emergency ward.

Minister, will you now admit that your health care reform in Sudbury is dangerous to the health of Sudburians and will you and your government pay for the medical services Mrs Rantala-Sykes requires now?

Hon Mrs Witmer: It's very important to remember that people throughout Ontario are working extremely hard in order to ensure that all patients have the services required. On my very recent visit to the Sudbury community, in meeting with the individuals who provide the health care, there was every indication that they were moving forward. Articles in the media indicated that all of the investments that we have made to date were resulting in enhanced and improved services for people in your community.

If we take a look at what we have invested in priority programs, we know that there is \$12 million more. There is \$2.5 million more in long-term-care services. There is half a million more in mental health services. There is \$1 million more —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: — and the list goes on and on. I know that people are doing all they can in Sudbury. They are trying to ensure that patients —

The Speaker: New question. Leader of the third party.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Attorney General. I am challenging the information that the Attorney General gave to the people of Ontario yesterday. The Attorney General will remember that there was a coroner's inquest into the murder of Arlene May and that coroner's inquest said, "The government of Ontario should establish a committee including equal numbers of government and community-based members to oversee the implementation and coordination of the recommendations made as a result of this inquest."

You were asked yesterday about that committee and you said: "I can tell the member that we have moved on setting up that committee. The committee is in fact being set up and is operating." Leaving aside the internal contradiction of your answer, we talked to two of the groups that had standing at that coroner's inquest, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses and the Metro Toronto Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children. Neither of those groups has heard from your government at all with respect to this committee. Would you care to clarify your answer, Mr Attorney General?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The member will be aware that in addition to the May-Iles issue there is also the Kaufman commission that's being set up. Many of the recommendations overlap in terms of recommendations made to the Ministry of the Attorney General.

As I said yesterday, we are working on establishing a joint community-government committee for the recommendations that have been made. That is in the course of being done, as I said yesterday, and certainly we are moving on the implementation of the jury recommendations. As I said yesterday, we've doubled the number of witness assistance program sites, we've created domestic violence courts and we've expanded the use of domestic assault review teams. Crowns are receiving ongoing training on domestic violence and sexual assault. There has been increased funding for specialized services for abused women which were not previously covered by legal aid, such as protection orders, custody and support orders. There has also been enhanced funding of \$300,000 from the Ontario Women's Directorate to the legal aid plan which has doubled the hours for performing —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Minister, the question was, is what you said yesterday accurate? I believe, from the answer that you just gave, it isn't. You should clarify that to the people of Ontario.

You indicated yesterday that you had set up, and in fact it was operating, this particular committee which came from the over 200 recommendations from this jury. That's what you said yesterday. We're asking you about these two organizations that had standing at the inquest, gave expert testimony and attended every one of the 51 days of the inquest. They have not been contacted by you or by the minister responsible for women's issues over the entire three months since those recommendations came out. These are the women who are dealing on the front lines day after day and see the human tragedy of what happens when women and children have to flee their homes after they've been battered and abused.

The Speaker: Question?

Ms Churley: Will you take responsibility today and stand on your feet and say that you will set up this committee, contact these women's groups and get it started immediately?

Hon Mr Harnick: We have taken responsibility and we are taking a look at all of the recommendations. We are taking a look at how to implement all of the recommendations. We are in the course of doing that. As I indicated, we are in the course of setting up this working group to deal with many of these recommendations. Many are not involved with the committee, but we have made the public commitment and the ministry is working at dealing with a number of these recommendations now. We are moving on that, as we are moving on the Kaufman commission recommendations. Certainly, as I've indicated: training and education — eight recommendations all now being worked on; enhanced capacity, more services, better procedures, 76 recommendations — we are now working on them; about 15% of the recommendations have been implemented to date.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): My question is to the minister responsible for children.

Minister, in the most recent speech from the throne, the Honourable Hilary Weston, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, announced that our government commissioned an early learning study which will be co-chaired by the Honourable Margaret McCain and Dr Fraser Mustard. It is my understanding that this study will make recommendations to the government on how best to prepare young and pre-school children for a lifetime of learning and that this is the first such study of its kind.

Minister, can you tell me what areas the co-chairs will look at before making their recommendations?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): I'd like to thank the member for Etobicoke-Humber for his question. This early-years study will provide options and recommendations to the government on the best ways of preparing all Ontario's children for success at school, in their careers and as members of society.

The development of the whole child is of great importance. It is the first time that a government in this province has taken the initiative to commission a study of this kind for children.

The study will also look at the roles and responsibilities of the community, voluntary, private and public sectors in the early years of a child's life. It will make recommendations to the government based on the best examples of programs that are helping children develop to their full potential.

1510

Mr Ford: It's clear that the co-chairs and their advisers have a very important job to do. I believe it is important to really understand what we are doing for children, both here and in other areas, before we can truly see the improvements that might be made. Is the study taking this approach and will the study be completed?

Hon Mrs Marland: We must have a true understanding of how programs are serving children and families before we will know how to improve these supports for Ontario's families. This study will do just that. It will take a comprehensive look at the programs that are currently available and pinpoint those that are most effective for our children. In addition, the study will be looking at the leading research on early learning and what programs are available in other jurisdictions. The study will look at what we in Ontario can do to help promote a lifetime of positive learning experiences for our children. I am eager to see the study recommendations, which should be complete in December 1998.

This government is committed to early learning and we will continue to support initiatives, such as our preschool speech and language program, which help children get off to their best start.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Mr Leach. Recently municipalities sent out their final tax bill. With it they sent out a shock wave to the business and residential

communities in Ontario: increases that will double and triple property taxes, increases that will force thousands of small business owners to close their doors, increases that will see bankruptcies skyrocket. Municipalities are forced to borrow to meet their basic needs.

I'm asking you today, Minister, will you come out of hibernation and announce in the House today what assistance you will propose, you will give, you will offer municipalities so they won't have to force homeowners to abandon their homes or business communities to abandon their businesses?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member for the question. The city of Toronto has worked with the new assessment system probably better than any other municipality in Ontario. As the member is aware, the province provided a number of tools to municipalities to ease the shift in taxes as a result of the new assessment system. I think everybody will recognize that the assessment system we had in Ontario was badly, badly broken and had to be fixed.

Toronto took advantage of the phase-in period and is phasing in residential taxes over five years. Toronto also recognized that there was some short-term assistance required for small businesses, so they accepted the tool that allowed a 2.5% cap to be put in place. Toronto has actually done a fine job and should be congratulated. Some of the decisions they had to make were extremely difficult and they did a very good job of making those very difficult decisions.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary, the member for Prescott and Russell.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): I find it strange when only 10% of municipalities have benefited from the tool you're talking about.

Last Friday, I met with two business entrepreneurs. They were furious about their municipal tax increase. I told them that they should point the finger at your government. Businesses in my area such as Plantagenet Printing, Bungee Banner of Plantagenet and St-Amour of Apple Hill are hit with municipal tax increases as high as 554%.

Minister, all of these tax increases are caused by your government's unplanned downloading. How does your government plan to help these small businesses which are the heart of the Ontario economy?

Hon Mr Leach: I believe the member opposite is talking about the new current value assessment system that has been put in place. That system was put in place to ensure there is fairness and equity right across Ontario. Whether it applies to Thunder Bay or whether it applies to the city of Toronto or whether it applies to Ottawa, there's a need in this province for fairness and equity. We gave the municipalities tools and the ability to phase in the different aspects of the new assessment system. Whether it was the residential portion, with a phase-in of up to eight years for residential properties, or small businesses, where they could have tiered the increase, they could have capped the increase, they had all the tools necessary to

ensure that the new, very fair and equitable tax system was phased in with little or no effect on the taxpayer.

The Speaker: Answer.

Hon Mr Leach: The municipalities had the wherewithal to do that. Many municipalities did that. Some chose not to do that. Those that chose not to do that have to answer to —

The Speaker: Petitions.

PETITIONS

FATHERS

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition that reads:

"Whereas children need the unfettered presence, care, and love of their fathers, and fathers want to have, care for and nurture their children after marriage breakdown as well as before; and

"Whereas marital separation is the end of the conjugal and financial relationship between a father and mother; and

"Whereas fathers experience misandry in the family courts of Ontario and other institutions which is depriving them of their children and subjugating them financially; and

"Whereas statutory recognition of these facts will reduce the burden of legal costs on families and the government, eliminate fatherlessness, cut down on self-destructive behaviour by separated fathers, reduce violence, and produce healthier and happier children with a greater sense of belonging and commitment to society;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, petition the Parliament of Ontario to pass legislation:

"To ensure that no father is deprived against his will of the opportunity to fully and completely parent his children regardless of the father's marital status (unless the father has put the children's welfare at risk and all available alternatives have been exhausted); and furthermore,

"To ensure that no father who is willing to care for his child is required to pay for the cost of child care provided by his child's mother when the child is under her care and not his care (unless the father has put the child's welfare at risk and all available alternatives have been exhausted), in particular for the cost of food, clothing and shelter.

"To provide an apology to fathers and children separated by the misandry of the family law system."

This is signed by over 300 constituents from ridings in eastern Ontario. I also affix my name to the petition.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Harris funding cuts are having a devastating impact on hospitals and patient care across Ontario, and have resulted in an anticipated \$38-million

deficit at the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals; and

"Whereas the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals will receive \$4 million less in revenue from the Ministry of Health and other sources; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris funding cuts are causing a crisis in hospital care in Hamilton-Wentworth, with hospitals facing huge deficits, cuts to patient care and bed closings; and

"Whereas Scott Rowand, president of the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp's hospitals, spoke out recently in the Hamilton Spectator saying, 'For the first time in my career, I don't know how to fix this problem other than an awful lot of closures of programs and services needed by the community'; and

"Whereas Mr Rowand went on to say: 'We need more cash in the system and we need it now. And that is cash to deal with the issues that we are dealing with today. Don't ask us to do anything more because people in the system are at their limit.'

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Harris government stop underfunding Ontario's hospitals to fund tax cuts for the wealthy and act immediately to restore funding to the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals so they can continue providing quality health care services to the people of Hamilton-Wentworth."

I continue to support the people of my community by adding my name to this petition.

1520

RAILWAY TRACKS

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): I have a petition from residents of Mississauga East to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Canadian Railway tracks located north of Dundas Street East and lying between Cawthra Road and Hurontario Street in the city of Mississauga cause undue noise, vibration and air pollution caused by the use of this track as a railway shunting yard;

"Whereas the operation of this track occurs any time between the hours of 8 pm to 3 am to facilitate a steel-loading facility;

"Whereas the steel-loading facility was erected in the area without an environmental study;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to recognize that the hours of operation of this railway should be confined to normal working hours or that the work performed at this railway be located in the industrial area east of Cawthra Road where it would pose less of a disturbance."

I will sign this petition.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Mike Harris has imposed skyrocketing taxes on small business owners in Windsor because of his government's downloading debacle;

"Whereas many small business owners in Windsor who pay commercial property taxes face increases of more than 100%;

"Whereas the Harris government tax assessment system is confusing, chaotic and an administrative nightmare for municipalities;

"Whereas the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers called the Harris tax assessment system a 'high-risk strategy' that will create 'serious problems' for taxpayers and municipalities; and

"Whereas Windsor small businesses facing massive tax increases will be forced to pass on the increases to their customers, causing a decrease in business and causing the Ontario economy to suffer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to devise a fair and uncomplicated system of tax assessment."

I'm pleased to join the members of the Erie Street Business Improvement Association in signing this petition.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the Harris government's 'downloading' to municipal taxpayers is directly responsible for the \$36.3-million shortfall to the region of Hamilton-Wentworth; and

"Whereas the Harris government 'downloading' is directly responsible for creating a property tax crisis in our region; and

"Whereas the Harris government, while boasting about its 30% tax cut which benefits mainly the wealthy, is making hard-working families, seniors, homeowners and businesses pay the price with outrageous property tax hikes and user fees for services; and

"Whereas city and regional councillors are being unfairly blamed and forced to explain these huge tax hikes, Hamiltonians know that what's really going on is that they are being forced to pay huge property tax increases to fund Harris's 30% tax giveaway to the rich; and

"Whereas homeowners, including seniors and low-income families, are facing huge property tax increases ranging from several hundred to thousands of dollars; and

"Whereas the Harris government 'downloading' has led to huge property tax increases for business that will force many small and medium-sized businesses in Hamilton-Wentworth to close or leave the community, putting people out of work; and

"Whereas Hamilton-Wentworth region is proposing that the Harris government share in the costs of an expanded rebate program, worth about \$3 million region-wide;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Harris government immediately eliminate the \$38-million downloading shortfall that is devastating and angering homeowners as well as killing businesses in Hamilton-Wentworth."

I continue to support my petitioners by adding my name to this one.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards;

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs;

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences;

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral;

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the hospital restructuring commission established by the Mike Harris government is deliberating in secret about the future of hospitals in the Niagara region and is expected to report in the autumn of this year;

"Whereas the St Catharines General Hospital, the Hotel Dieu Hospital and the Shaver Hospital, along with the Niagara rehabilitation centre, have in the past provided excellent medical care for the people of St Catharines;

"Whereas the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital, the Douglas Memorial Hospital in Fort Erie, the Port Colborne hospital and the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby have been key centres of health care in the Niagara Peninsula;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to maintain existing medical services provided at these hospitals, restore the proposed \$43-million cut from operating funds for the Niagara hospitals; and

"That the Ontario Ministry of Health provide additional funding to expand health care services available

in the Niagara region for residents in the Niagara Peninsula."

I affix my name to this petition as I'm in complete agreement with its content.

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to save the Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital.

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned citizens of Hamilton and the surrounding communities, beg leave to petition the government of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission has announced the closure of Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Health Services Restructuring Commission, is divesting its responsibility for mental health care without hearing from the community first; and

"Whereas community-based mental health care providers will bear the brunt of this ill-fated decision by being forced to meet what is sure to be an increased demand for their services; and

"Whereas the community pays the price for cuts to mental health care;

"Therefore we, the citizens of Hamilton and area, who care about quality, accessibility and publicly accountable mental health care for all Ontarians, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately set aside all recommendations to divest and/or close Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital and the programs and services it provides; and

"Further, to call for full hearings to seek community solutions to community issues and to democratically decide the future of mental health care for the citizens of Hamilton and its surrounding area."

I add my name to this petition also.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards;

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral and religious beliefs;

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral;

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other

forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

This petition is signed by 250 —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. The member for Yorkview.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a petition submitted to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we are concerned about the quality of health care in Ontario;

"Whereas we do not believe health care should be for sale;

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is taking steps to allow profit-driven companies to provide health care services in Ontario;

"Whereas we won't stand for profits over people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not privatize our health care services in Ontario."

I concur with the petitioners and I will affix my signature.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas each year in Ontario approximately 300 workers are killed on the job, several thousand die of occupational diseases and 400,000 suffer work-related injuries and illnesses; and

"Whereas during the past decade the Workers' Health and Safety Centre proved to be the most cost-effective WCB-funded prevention organization dedicated to worker health and safety concerns; and

"Whereas the WCB provides over 80% of its legislated prevention funding to several employer-controlled safety associations and less than 20% to the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre recently lost several million dollars in funding and course revenue due to government changes to legislated training requirements; and

"Whereas 30% of Workers' Health and Safety Centre staff were laid off due to these lost training funds; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre now faces an additional 25% cut to its 1998 budget, which will be used to augment new funding for employer safety

associations in the health, education and services sector; and

"Whereas the WCB's 1998 planned baseline budget cuts for safety associations and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre will be disproportionately against the workers' centre and reduce its 1998 budget allocation to less than 15% of the WCB prevention funding,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the WCB's proposed cuts and direct the WCB to increase the Workers' Health and Safety Centre's funding to at least 50% of the WCB's legislated prevention funding; and

"Further we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the WCB to significantly increase its legislated prevention funding in order to eliminate workplace illness, injury and death."

I continue to support these petitions by adding my name.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INSTRUCTION TIME:

MINIMUM STANDARDS ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998

SUR LES HEURES D'ENSEIGNEMENT : NORMES MINIMALES

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 63, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to instructional time / *Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne les heures d'enseignement.*

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 5, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Johnson has moved second reading of Bill 63. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1533 to 1538.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Bassett, Isabel
Beaubien, Marcel
Boushy, Dave
Brown, Jim
Carroll, Jack
Chudleigh, Ted
Clement, Tony
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Doyle, Ed
Elliott, Brenda

Harnick, Charles
Harris, Michael D.
Hastings, John
Hodgson, Chris
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Johnson, David
Jordan, W. Leo
Leach, Al
Leadston, Gary L.
Marland, Margaret

Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Ross, Lillian
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Saunderson, William
Shea, Derwyn
Skarica, Toni
Smith, Bruce
Snobelen, John
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Tascaona, Joseph N.

Eves, Ernie L.
Fisher, Barbara
Flaherty, Jim
Ford, Douglas B.
Fox, Gary
Galt, Doug
Grimmett, Bill
Guzzo, Gary J.
Hardeman, Ernie

Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Mushinski, Marilyn
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Palladini, Al
Petit, Trevor

Tilson, David
Tsubouchi, David H.
Tumbull, David
Vankoughnet, Bill
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Young, Terence H.

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles
Boyd, Marion
Bradley, James J.
Caplan, David
Christopherson, David
Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.
Colle, Mike
Conway, Sean G.
Crozier, Bruce
Cullen, Alex

Curling, Alvin
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Kennedy, Gerard
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Larkin, Frances
Marchese, Rosario
Martin, Tony
McGuinty, Dalton

McLeod, Lyn
Patten, Richard
Phillips, Gerry
Pouliot, Gilles
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Silipo, Tony
Wildman, Bud
Wood, Len

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 64; the nays are 35.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 5, Bill 63 is ordered for third reading, to be considered immediately.

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): I move third reading of Bill 63, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to instructional time.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to ask unanimous consent from all members of the House to divide the time equally among the three caucuses.

The Speaker: Agreed? No.

We're into debate now and the leadoff debate is Mr Smith for the government.

Mr Smith: I'll be sharing my time this afternoon with my colleague from Sarnia, Mr Boushy. I'll be making some brief comments with respect to third reading of this bill —

The Speaker: Can you stop the clock just for a minute. Member for Middlesex, if you could do me a favour when you get up again: Could you tell me who you're sharing your time with? I wasn't certain about it.

Mr Smith: Mr Speaker, just to indicate to you that I'll be sharing my time this afternoon with my colleague from Sarnia, Mr Boushy, and will be making some brief comments with respect to Bill 63. He'll obviously carry the remaining portion of that.

It's my pleasure to rise and speak in support of third reading of Bill 63. As I've indicated on a previous occasion, this bill is necessary and appropriate to bring clarification to the meaning of instructional time as it applies to our teachers in this province. In that context it's important to emphasize that this particular bill is one part of a larger, comprehensive plan that the government of Ontario has advanced with respect to reforming education

in this province, a comprehensive plan that is based on a vision and the sole motive of bringing and re-establishing a quality education system in this province.

It's in that context that since 1995 the government has pursued a comprehensive proposal whereby we're seeing more resources directed to the classroom, where we're seeing the tools that are necessary to deliver a quality education in this province being realized, whether it's in the form of financial assistance to school boards through transitional measures or whether it's in actual materials that students need in terms of their classroom experience in the form of textbooks.

We've talked a great deal about the need for and the introduction of province-wide testing and the role teachers have played in that context to evaluate and bring about a new standard and an opportunity to establish new benchmarks in terms of what we want to do with province-wide testing and how it relates to future curriculum documents, how it relates to new opportunities in the future with respect to teacher development and professional development for those teachers who are currently in the system.

I briefly want to reacquaint us with why the bill is before the Legislature. On a number of occasions the minister has spoken about this issue in terms of instructional time. In fact, we've brought this bill forward in legislation to ensure that there's a consistent province-wide understanding and application of instructional time while still allowing local flexibility with respect to its application.

The legislation confirms what constitutes instruction for the purposes of complying with section 170.2. Section 170.2, with respect to instructional time for teachers, sets minimum teaching time for elementary teachers as an average of at least 1,300 minutes over a five-day period, and for secondary teachers an average of at least 1,250 minutes over a five-day period.

In addition, the proposed legislation confirms that secondary school teachers are providing instruction when as part of their regular timetable they are supervising examinations or providing instruction in areas of course or program that are obviously eligible for credit, a special education program, a remedial class to assist pupils in completing a credit course or program required for graduation, an ESL program, an apprenticeship program, a co-operative education program or any other course or program that is specified in regulation.

It's in that context where there was genuine concern that some within the education community were pursuing a broader definition of what instructional time in fact meant. It was that confusion and broader application that necessitated the need for this particular bill and why the bill has been introduced by the Minister of Education and Training.

I think it's important to highlight as well that notwithstanding the debate that has occurred and the issues that continue to arise with respect to hours of teaching time, the standard that is being established in this province is still exceeded by the provinces of Newfoundland, Prince

Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick and Manitoba. So we're not by any means charting a new course here in terms of a standard that is outrageous by comparison to other provincial jurisdictions in this country. The standard certainly is in the middle of the road with respect to comparative hours of teaching time per day as it applies to other provinces. In fact, Ontario's new standard would still exceed only those numbers provided by the provinces of Saskatchewan and Quebec.

The point I wish to make here is that from my perspective, from the minister's perspective and from my caucus colleagues' perspective, the request that is being made of teachers in this province very much parallels, and in some cases is obviously exceeded by, the standards that have been established in some seven other provinces in this country. It's significant in terms of the instructional time that this clarification be clearly understood. It's important in the context of the quality initiatives this government has brought forward. It's imperative in the context of the new standards that are being established for education in this province and what it means for the young people who are currently studying either at the elementary or secondary level in Ontario. That is why this bill was necessitated.

As I indicated yesterday in debate, albeit there has been no real demand or necessity for clarification of this definition in the past, obviously there was a need to bring conclusion to that particular issue and why this particular bill is now before us, and should the bill receive final approval, an important step in the next phase of successful and meaningful implementation and management of education reforms in this province.

1550

In that context Bill 63 is important, a very important part, one that can't be dismissed, but a smaller part in comparison to the bigger issues that this government has pursued on behalf of the students of this province. It's an issue that requires clarification, and I'm confident that at the end of the day, should this legislation be passed by the Legislature, there should be no confusion as to what is determined by "instructional time."

On that point I wish to conclude my remarks by simply saying that this bill is necessary and appropriate. It makes sense and certainly is necessary, as I indicated previously, as we move into the next phase of education reform for Ontario.

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): We are certainly going through a period of transition in our education system, and I believe it's up to all of us — students, teachers, parents and government — to work together in creating a quality education system that will provide Ontario's children the opportunity to achieve everything we know they are able to do.

We're all aware of the many studies, reports and royal commissions that have recommended major changes to the education system for many, many years, changes like clear province-wide standards, report cards that parents can understand, consistent up-to-date curriculum requirements

and more accountable spending rules so we know where education dollars are going and can make accurate comparisons.

In this regard, I just want to mention to this House the feedback I had over the weekend. I made a point of speaking to two elementary schoolteachers in my riding. The elementary schools in my riding have settled, with contracts. One teacher said certainly they are working harder and the load is greater than they ever had before, but she said to me, "We knew those changes had to come, and we're working hard to make them work."

Another teacher said to me: "I'm not too sure what the high school teachers are hollering about, because they are just catching up with us. We believe that the system is good and these reforms had to come."

Our government responded to these calls for a significant improvement with a variety of measures, all aimed at refocusing the system to put the emphasis back on fundamentals while still offering children opportunities to become well-rounded individuals. A larger portion of the education budget has been redirected into the classroom, as you're all aware. Average class sizes have been capped, and we have set clear and higher standards for grade-by-grade achievement so that students and their parents will know exactly what the expectations are every step of the way. We have invested, as you are aware, \$100 million in new textbooks and other materials such as software and science equipment. This fall there are 3.2 million new textbooks in our children's classrooms.

I would like to just take you back to after we got elected in 1995. The first group of teachers came to see me in my office. They suggested they wanted a cap on class sizes, and I said to them, "We'll do that in regulations." They said: "No, we don't trust you. We want it in Bill 160."

Mr Wildman: You proved you couldn't be trusted.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Order, please, member for Algoma.

Mr Boushy: We did put it in Bill 160. I'm not too sure what they're hollering about now. I understand the teachers wanted the cap lifted. They can't have it both ways.

Mr Wildman: No, they want maximum class sizes.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Algoma, come to order.

Mr Boushy: Province-wide testing and standardized report cards are now fully in place in Ontario schools, because our children deserve to have an equal opportunity for a quality education. No matter where they live in the province, when school is let out in June, all students in the same grade will have been taught the same fundamentals and skills to reach the same enhanced learning goals.

It's also important to recognize the right and responsibility of parents to have a say when decisions about their children's education are being made. That's why we have established a parent council at each and every school in the province. The curriculum, report cards and testing reforms will put the information parents need to participate in those decisions right in their hands.

But I think we all agree on the truth that the teacher in the classroom is the most important factor in the success of our education system. I find the current job actions still occurring in some boards very regrettable. When teachers' unions use parents and children as pawns in a protest that has nothing to do with the quality of education but rather with the working conditions, it harms the trust between all of us that's necessary if we are to truly have the best education system in the world.

Happily, we have strong indications that agreements can and are being reached by boards and unions that agree that students' needs come first, before any disagreement on working contracts. I want to tell you that I am very proud that the Lambton Kent board, the Sarnia, Lambton and Kent board, and its elementary school teachers led by example. They settled in direct bargaining, well before the school year began. There was no instruction time lost. There was no concern for parents. Students and teachers all knew that come September school would be in session, not only with business as usual but with new and higher standards in place. I'm very proud of that fact. All elementary schools in my riding, in both systems, are in school and working.

Let me give you another example. Ontario college teachers went without contracts for two years, but they kept teaching and they kept negotiating at the same time, until they secured a contract and a raise as well. That's what I would say is a responsible attitude to take. The professionalism shown by these teachers is why they are so respected in my community, because I have in my community a college called Lambton College, and I am very proud of our teachers. They have priorities straight, and they exemplify what's best in our education system.

Unfortunately, may I add, not all boards and unions have followed their shining example. Every day for the last month I have read stories or listened to complaints about activities being boycotted by teachers. I have to wonder why and, more directly, how teachers can do this.

Last week I heard about a school in the Hamilton area where the teachers refused to participate in a graduation ceremony for the students. Can you imagine? I am truly saddened and troubled that this could happen. What purpose could possibly have been achieved, what point could possibly have been made by those teachers not being there for the students on one of the most important nights in their life?

In my community there are students who are losing out on playing football after school, playing in the school band or acting in after-school plays. Again, I fail to understand why students must be harmed because some teachers' unions disagree with the time they're expected to spend in the classrooms.

Mr Wildman: It's not about time, it's about 25 more students.

Mr Boushy: The main complaint of the secondary teachers' union, as we all know, is the amount of time teachers are expected to spend in the classroom. Any high school teacher will tell you that.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Who writes this stuff?

Mr Wildman: It is not about time. That is where you are.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Members for Algoma and St Catharines, come to order.

Mr Boushy: Bill 160 requires high school teachers to teach on average an extra 25 minutes a day, for a total of four hours and 10 minutes per day. This is still less than teachers in other provinces and less than elementary school teachers are required to teach. They are doing it in my riding, and they're happy. The elementary school teachers are happy doing it.

Mr Wildman: The secondary school teachers offered to teach that and your government said no.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Algoma, order.

Mr Boushy: It's notable that all of these other teachers still find time to enrich students' lives with after-school activities. Not only do the students benefit from these activities by becoming more well-rounded individuals, but the teachers also benefit from getting to know their students better and working with them to organize events that are fun and exciting for everyone involved. It's tragic that both teachers and students are losing out because of detrimental pressure tactics foolishly promoted by teacher unions.

1600

We think everyone shares our commitment to quality. We simply disagree on how to achieve it. Those disagreements are political and they should be kept in that arena for the next election, which probably will be called within a year.

What quality education is about is building and developing a partnership among students, parents, teachers and government to successfully implement education reforms. We can all agree that all children have the opportunity to be the best they can be, no matter where they live or what their abilities or special needs may be.

I sincerely hope that all teachers across our province will quickly rethink the strategy of withholding their participation. For the sake of our students we need to strengthen our level of co-operation and commitment to doing what's best for our children.

Since I have time, I would like to take a minute or so because I heard opposition from the Liberal benches and the NDP benches. I am very pleased to have this extra time to make one or two additional comments.

I wish someone could clarify what exactly the Liberal Party stance on education is. I would love to know.

First, we have the member for Ottawa South introducing a private bill to take away from teachers the right to strike after October. Then, when he is Leader of the Opposition, we see him supporting an illegal strike and walking with the strikers. Then, during the last union action, he says he won't support back-to-work legislation unless the Education Relations Commission says the school year is threatened. What does he do when he realizes parents want students back in school no matter what the ERC has or hasn't said? In the grand Liberal

tradition, he decided to still vote against the bill but to say no quickly, a very sudden reversal from the Liberal education critic who vowed to stall the legislation.

What exactly do the Liberals think? I don't understand what he's thinking. One day he's for a strike; another day he's against a strike.

Mr Bradley: Did you want it to go all week?

The Acting Speaker: Member for St Catharines.

Mr Boushy: While I might disagree with the NDP policy, at least I know where they come from. They're focused. They are for unions.

Mr Bradley: It's in the script.

The Acting Speaker: Come on. Order.

Mr Boushy: They're for teachers.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bradley: It's quite obvious that it's in the script. Every Tory member has been given the script. They're supposed to say, "Well, you know, we disagree with the NDP but at least we know where the NDP stands," and the Liberals of course are the enemy. They've got to build up the NDP. Not that the NDP wants this, because they are totally opposed to the policies of the Conservative government, but it's a strategy they have of trying to prop up a third party.

I'm surprised the member for Sarnia would simply read the script from Guy Giorno, the 30-something whiz kid who makes all the decisions for this government. I'm shocked the member for Sarnia would do that. What the member should know —

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): What about the EI?

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Bradley: I say to the member for Etobicoke-Humber that I understand Chris Stockwell has now sold 5,000 memberships for Etobicoke Centre. But I digress.

I want to tell you what is happening out there is that at no time in the history of the province has the morale of those who deliver the front-line education services been at a lower ebb. Many of these people in years gone by have supported the Conservative Party. They've supported, in fact, all three parties according to what their philosophy happens to be. But you people have gone on the attack. What you want to do is set the entire population against a segment of the population of this province. That is why the morale is so low. I've never seen it that way. It's extremely serious.

You laugh on the other side. You guffaw because Tom Long and the other gurus say: "Hey, this is smart politics. Why don't you set everybody in the province against the teachers? That's really smart. That'll get us re-elected." But ultimately it is the responsibility of government to bring people together, to enlist the support of everyone so that you have co-operation when you're trying to implement change in education or anywhere else.

Mr Wildman: I listened to the member for Sarnia, and a couple of times during his remarks he said he didn't understand why the teachers are upset. He also said he didn't understand why they weren't participating in extracurricular activities. So I'll try to explain it to him.

The reason the teachers are upset is that the government is not really talking about instructional time. The teachers' federations, or the unions, as the member calls them, offered to extend the periods so that the teachers could in fact teach the amount of minutes that the minister wants. But the government said no because the government doesn't want teachers to teach more time; they don't want them to teach the same number of students they now have for more minutes. They want them to teach more students.

By saying, "No, we don't we want you to extend the periods," they were saying to the teachers, "We want you to teach an additional period," meaning more students, because it means they have an additional class. So they are to teach not 1,250 minutes to the same number of students; they are to teach a total of 1,250 minutes by teaching an additional class. That means not 25 more minutes but 25 more students. That's what the issue is about. Teachers who are now being told that they have to teach more students and do an additional preparation for an extra class and not have the time they had before to do remedial work, to have more contact with individual students, to give extra help and to be involved in extracurricular activities are saying, "We don't have the time we had before."

So the issue is not, "Twenty-five minutes more: Is that too much to ask?" as the Tory ads say. The issue is that the government refused to agree to more time for the students they are now teaching and is requiring teachers to teach more students.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I too would like to help the member for Sarnia, because he said there was something he didn't understand about the Liberal position. I suggest to you that what I'm going to tell you now, you get Hansard tomorrow and you carry it around with you.

What we oppose is this: total centralized control over education at Queen's Park; trying to sell average class size as class size reductions; cuts to JK; cuts to textbooks and supplies; cuts to adult education; cuts to special education. Charter schools we oppose. The voucher system we oppose. Privatization of our education system we oppose. We oppose the ability of the Minister of Finance to set a \$6-billion education property tax bill behind closed doors. We oppose constant attacks on teachers and the public education system.

Here is what we support.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Crozier: I want everybody quietly to listen to this, yes.

Accessible, quality, publicly funded education; local flexibility to set local education priorities; standardized curriculum developed with the help of Ontario's educators; standardized report cards that show parents and students in a way that's fair and understandable when progress is needed and where it's being made; meaningful class sizes; junior kindergarten; principals and vice-principals who are educational leaders, not business managers separated from their teaching colleagues; advis-

ory parent councils; funding for textbooks, special education and adult education; access to psychologists, social workers and speech pathologists for students who need this help; teacher education and training that supports our teachers in their efforts to give our children the best learning.

I have a couple more, but I'll save them for later.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the remarks of the member for Sarnia. As my colleague from Algoma has pointed out, the key issue is not one of time at the end of the day, although the government, through its ads, would like people who have been beat up by this government to sit back and say, "I've been beat up so badly in terms of my job and my wages, and family members have lost their jobs, why shouldn't somebody have to work a few more minutes?" Once again, they're trying to play to the worst fears, having put people in a psychological frame of mind, through what they've done to them, such that they're receptive to that. That's the issue. It's not 25 minutes of more work; it's the fact that there are 25 more students, and that means less care and attention to all our children from the teachers who are left.

1610

As to the Libs, the reality there is that they can make all the promises they want and they can talk about all the things they oppose, but what they don't oppose is the tax cut. They like the tax cut. That suits their friends in their party just fine. So when they stand up and make promises about education and they're going to spend more money on teachers and they're going to spend more money on textbooks and they're going to spend more money on this, that and the other, the reality is that there's not a dime in the kind of budget they've put together to pay for it, because they're going to leave the tax cut in place.

We know that they were originally planning to spend the Tory surplus through this. But of course, with the North American economy going into the ditch, there won't be a surplus. The only place to find that money is to say to wealthy Ontarians, who benefited the most from the Tory tax cut, "You have an obligation" — the 6% of the top income earners — "to put money back in the education system and the health care system." The NDP will do that. The Liberals will leave that tax cut there.

The Acting Speaker: Two minutes to sum up, the member for Middlesex.

Mr Smith: I am pleased to summarize the comments my colleague for Sarnia made, and I certainly appreciate the comments from the members for St Catharines, Algoma, Essex South and Hamilton Centre.

I want to say at the outset that the member for Sarnia was not speaking from a script; he was speaking from his personal perspective, his experiences in Sarnia, what he is hearing from his constituents in that community. That's the same level of detail he's bringing to me and to the minister as he represents them, appropriately so, on education issues.

On the issue of teacher support, the Liberals continue to address the issue of teacher morale. I'll be the first to

admit it's a difficult time whenever you're going through a change process. The changes to the education system that this government is proposing are necessary and very necessary in terms of the future of the education system and as well the education experience of its students. Yes, there are some challenges there. Yes, teachers have been involved. We've solicited their input where their involvement is most meaningful, and that's in the academics and delivery of education, be it in province-wide testing, be it in the development of elementary or secondary school curriculum materials.

I am always, as I said yesterday in debate, fascinated by the comments the Liberal members continue to propose. We have a leader of the Ontario Liberal Party who championed the cause to eliminate the ability of teachers to strike in this province; a leader who then was on the stage with union leaders across this province during an illegal walkout, supporting them at the same time the Minister of Education and Training, on a different stage, was charting a new future for students in this province, one that is far more meaningful.

The member for Essex South talked about the proposals they are making. I hear a lot of similarity there in terms of standardized curriculums and testing. Those are initiatives the Conservative government of this province has pursued.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Crozier: I said we agree with it. In any event, I guess it's a privilege — it certainly is a privilege; I don't know whether I'm pleased — to be standing here and speaking to Bill 63, because it's another case of us being here today because the government has to clarify something that they didn't put in a previous bill. If they'd made these clarifications in Bill 160, we simply wouldn't have to be here debating this bill today.

The irony of all that is that it's not going to solve the problem. I believe it's not going to solve the problem for this reason: On September 4 the government wrote a letter to school boards clarifying this definition we're debating today, which led negotiations in a certain direction because of that clarification. At the same time, the back-to-work legislation, which was passed on September 28, was clear pressure on those negotiations — excuse me, five days later. I'm sorry. This was September 9. Five days later, in an acknowledgement that this made it impossible for some boards to reach an agreement, the government then said they would allow contracts that didn't comply with this definition. Now we're back putting the definition into the legislation. If that isn't confusing and if that isn't going to require some more fixing, I don't know what will.

This legislation, for example, appears to be inconsistent with other changes the government has announced. The contracts have to be two-year deals. The government is planning a whole series of changes, apparently, at the secondary level, including the introduction of a teacher adviser or mentoring type of component. Since it's mandated by the government and clearly instructional, we think the teacher advisers should be part of the instructional time and part of this legislation. The problem

is there's no way to change those contracts between now and September 1999 when the change is supposed to be implemented, yet some contracts will go into the year 2000. So I still think we're a long way from settling the problem with the definition of "teaching time."

I think back to when I was in school, and I'll give them an opportunity to laugh, because that obviously was a few years ago, but I can still remember when I was in school. I can remember Miss Coyle, Mrs Montgomery, Miss Bennie, who for many years was a principal — a school in Leamington was named after her — Miss Tirnan, Mr Hume — Mr Hume was one of the greatest principals that a secondary school could ever want or have. One of my teachers, Mr Cobbledick, who still lives in Leamington — he and his wife I hope enjoy good health — was at Leamington District Secondary School when Mr Hume was the principal.

I think Mr Hume would roll over — no, maybe he'd stand up in heaven, where he is today, and be appalled at what's happening to the education system in Ontario. Mr Hume didn't need the Minister of Education to call the shots. Mr Hume wasn't concerned whether the Minister of Finance had control over \$6 billion in property tax behind closed doors, because we had a local school board at that time that provided adequate financing for teachers, books, extracurricular activities.

I was in the school pipe band and there was no concern that that program was going to be cancelled because of a funding formula that was devised by some bureaucrats and politicians in the city of Toronto. There was no concern about that kind of thing in those days. I think we got a reasonable education in those days, and present company excluded, there were a lot of bright students that graduated from high schools all across this province. It wasn't in the absolute chaos that it's in today.

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Mr Hume was one of the toughest principals going. He didn't need regulations written by somebody behind closed doors in Toronto at Queen's Park. Mr Hume had his own regulations. Some of them we didn't agree with at that time. Some of them if you didn't abide by as regulations you found yourself in a whole pot of trouble. Not only did you find yourself in a whole pot of trouble at school, you found yourself in a whole pot of trouble at home, because the parents of the school system we had when I went to school supported the principal, the vice-principal, the teachers, because they were all working together for a better education for their children.

If I got into a little bit of trouble with Mr Hume and went crying home to my parents — not literally, mind you, because boys weren't supposed to cry in those days. When I went home to my parents and tried to complain that Mr Hume had been too tough on us or that a teacher that Mr Hume supported had been too tough on us, I was told to get back to school the next day and get back to learning.

We had a team then, and I think that teamwork has gone on in our school system over the years, from the time I was in the system until just recently. A few years ago, that teamwork started to fall apart. Morale started to fall.

Now we're in a position today where there's strife throughout the educational system. I don't think school boards like it; I don't think parents like it; I don't think students like it. The common denominator is the government of the day.

They try to spin to the parents and to the public, those of us who don't have children, young people, in school any more, "We're going to cap class sizes." No, they're not. They're average class sizes. You go back to your ridings and ask parents out there today, "Do you have only 22 children in your elementary class and 25 students in your high school class?" I don't think you'll find that all of them do. Frankly, I don't know how many do or don't, but we're talking about average class sizes. So there are still classes out there that number above 25, and 22 elementary size. There are still classes out there that have 30 or more in them.

They want the teachers to teach more time. Fine. As has been suggested, and I'll remind everyone here, the teachers offered to teach more time; they offered to spend more time that's recorded — because they spend an awful lot of time that isn't recorded — with those students, another 25 minutes. What did the government say? "No. We want them to teach an extra class. We want our teachers to teach more kids in less time."

We all agree that we want a higher quality. We all agree with quality. I agree with many of the improvements that have been made in the educational system over the years and we have to keep on improving it and keep trying to be better. But you don't do it by spending less time with students. Not all students require the direct attention of a teacher, but certainly some require and indeed should be able to receive additional time with a teacher, because some kids need some extra time and in the end they're all going to be better for our society.

Some of the members in this Legislature who share the number of years of experience that I do don't have children in school, but as we get older, we're going to benefit from the education our kids get today. All society benefits from it. Anybody who doesn't have any children in school any more and says, "I think there's too much time spent with kids. It costs us too much money to teach kids," has forgotten that there was somebody who preceded them who made sacrifices for their children. For those in the Legislature, and I envy them, who are younger and have yet to have a family, educators are trying to pave the way.

What does the government do? They simply divide everybody. They get everybody at each other's throats. They don't, in my view, try to get back to the teamwork that we used to have in our schools, that I spoke of, where administrators, principals and vice-principals worked with teachers and teachers, vice-principals and principals worked with kids.

We get into these debates and we get into this disruption in the education system we have and everybody says it's for the kids. I think for the most part everybody is trying to do what is best for the kids. But you don't do it by helter-skelter tearing things apart. You don't do it by

ramming things down everybody's throat. You don't do it by putting out a funding formula that treats urban schools like it treats rural schools.

I can think of two schools, Teacher — Speaker. You are a teacher as well in the way you keep us in order here. I think of two schools in my riding.

One is Western Secondary School. Western Secondary School is a school for special kids. There are others within the greater Essex county public school board that are threatened, and I think each one of these institutions has to be looked at in view of the value that it gives to our community and to our society. I know others will speak of other schools within the system. But within my riding it's Western Secondary School. Special-education, special-needs students go there, and they do remarkably well. They're great. They are learning the way they need to learn. They are learning what they need to learn. That's a rural high school. You take that away and what do we have?

We've got Harrow high school. It's in a community of about 2,600 people surrounded by perhaps another 3,000 or 4,000. Harrow is a small, agriculturally based community in southwestern Ontario. You take the high school out of that community and you're taking the gymnasium out of that community, you're taking facilities that can be used by community groups out of that community, and what you're doing is saying no to people who want to move into a small rural community because we don't have a high school for your kids.

In the wisdom of those who have gone before, maybe Harrow high school and Western school in the county — and by the way, Western school is absolutely full, so it isn't a question of space. It's a question of a funding formula that's going to make for some very difficult decisions by the greater Windsor-Essex county public school board. But you take Harrow high school out of that community and you take part of the guts out of that community; you take part of the spirit out of that community. When we start to take the guts and the spirit out of rural Ontario, that's the time we have to change a government that fights with everybody and get one that wants to work together.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I'm delighted to join in this debate. Actually, we are debating two things today. One is of course what is in front of us, the instructional time as it has been presented by the government. The other is the curtail motion that the government introduces as a time allocation motion or, in words so the people out there can understand what we are talking about, a motion to cut the debate on Bill 63, which was introduced by the government a few days ago following the vote in the House here with respect to the back-to-work legislation.

We said, "Sure, go ahead, but let us debate it," and lo and behold, they came after one day and said: "That's enough. We've decided that enough has been said and we have listened to everybody. There is no more debate necessary, and therefore we are going to introduce a time allocation to end further debate," which is most unfortunate, because I would say, with all due respect to the

honourable members of the government side, that they understand the importance of the argument, the subject here, if you will. We are talking instructional time.

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It's not the five minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes or even 20 minutes of extra time; it is the quality of education we give our kids in the classroom. I would say that kids, after the introduction and passing of the legislation of this government, will be getting less time. What I understand as instructional time is whatever time is allocated to students by the teachers, wherever they are, in whatever class, in whatever subject, whether it's physics, gym, whether it's sports, whether it's morale, anything.

I was particularly interested to hear the member for York Mills the other day say in the House — I could almost quote verbatim what he said. He said that we owe it to the children — I assume he meant the children of our province — to give them a better education system. I don't think we can argue with that. I don't think any member in this House would argue with that. Then he went on to say that our colleges and universities are not producing enough good students, but he didn't say why.

The funny thing is that maybe he stopped at that particular spot because they know that now we are seeing — the students are seeing, the parents and the teachers are seeing — the consequences of the now infamous Bill 160. This is part of the family, if you will, of Bill 160. Now, whether it's Bill 160 or Bill 63 or whatever else they may introduce in the future, slowly they are coming home to this chamber to roost. Now we are seeing the consequences of the legislation which they imposed on us and the people of Ontario: the teachers, the parents and the students.

We can't have it both ways. We can't have the Premier, the Minister of Education, a few members of the cabinet, the hierarchy there, the advisers, saying, "This is what you have to do to accomplish your tax cuts" at the expense of — we'll leave that for another time, because it would take me about an hour and I only have 15 minutes.

You cannot have that decided behind closed doors. Now they've got the power. They can come into the chamber here and pretend, so godly, to the public out there that "Now we have eliminated the fund; we have taken it over." Oh, sure, oh, yes indeed they have taken over that particular power. But we have no more control. Parents have no control. We don't have a say. Teachers, parents, students don't have a say. Behind closed doors they retain the power for themselves to decide when, how and how much, and then how they are going to disburse it.

Then they come into the chamber here and say, "We are improving the education system," when instead they've been cutting more than \$1 billion. I don't think it takes a mathematician or a genius or whatever else you want to call it — confront the students and teachers and say: "You know what? We are really for reform." This is what they're saying in the House. "We are here really for education reform." Of course there is always some room for improvement, but you cannot decide behind closed doors that you're going to cut \$1 billion and then come

into this chamber and say to us and say to the public that you want to provide the best education system for our kids, say, "We are going to provide a better education system." I don't think so.

You cannot come into this chamber after you have decided in the back room to cut teachers and say, "We are going to provide a better education system." You cannot decide behind closed doors that you're going to be cutting \$1 billion and then make the people believe that you're going to provide a better education system. You cannot make the kids of our province believe it, when you've cut \$1 billion in funding, when you continue to increase tuition fees by some 60%, when you have fewer teachers, and then come into this House and say, "We are improving the education system." Are we saying that closing schools improves our education system? I don't think so. Parents don't think so.

We had the Premier in here today saying to us: "We are doing well. We are listening to the parents." Which parents are the minister and the Premier listening to? Who are they listening to? I have yet to find a parent telling me, "We agree with the government, with the funding formula, with the closing of schools, with the per pupil space allocation." I have yet to find one parent.

Last week, I believe it was Monday night, I attended one big meeting with I have no idea how many hundreds of people. The meeting was about the committee in charge of reviewing school closures and stuff like that. We were there to review the possible closure of 129 schools in Metro Toronto. I fail to understand it. I hope the Premier and the minister are listening to what the parents and the teachers are saying out there. The parents are saying: "We bought our home in this area because of the school and now you are going to close the school. This is what you call service?"

This is double-talk, this particular piece of material here, total political garbage, and I'll tell you why. This comes from the now government, from the Minister of Education, from the Premier of our province. This is what it says, among many other things: "We want parental involvement. Call your child's school to get involved in your parent council." Parents are saying to me: "We won't have a school to get involved in any more, so what the heck are you telling us? We may have to look for another place, because we don't want our kids to be bused, God knows how many miles." If that school closes, there is no other school close by for how many kilometres that will take the extra kids.

On early learning, it says here, "All schools can offer early learning programs to ensure your child gets a successful start in school." You are taking the very possibility to provide basic education at the most important time and you are closing schools in the local communities. You tell me, when you have to bus kids 10 kilometres away, how they're going to get the best education possible. I really don't think so. This is another case where the Premier and the government are saying, "We've got to do more with less." It's worth repeating.

This is something I got in my door just two or three weeks ago. Perhaps I shouldn't show it that much. It comes from one of the most respected agencies in our province, in Canada, I would say, or perhaps internationally. This is addressed to teachers, parents, students and whoever wants to avail themselves of these particular programs.

This is what it says: "Will your child or grandchild be financially equipped to attend a post-secondary institution?" It's worth reading. It does not come from any member of the government side and it does not come from any member of the opposition side. This is what the public, what professional people out there in the field, are saying about the education system and this government, and it's worth reading.

"The province has capped student loans at \$7,000 a year. But student debt isn't limited — only the amounts governments are willing to cover. Students will have to earn, beg or borrow...."

A first-year medical student starting this fall will see a 67% rise in tuition to \$7,844. In September 1999, new medical students will pay \$11,000 a year in fees.

First-year dentistry students are also going to see the price of their education skyrocket — to \$12,000 plus another \$5,000 in instrument fees. Add living expenses, books and food and dental students are looking at spending \$25,000 a year."

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This doesn't come from the parents, the students, the members of this House; this comes from the president of this well-known, well-respected international agency located here in Toronto. These are the professional people who are polling the figures for the government, for us and for the parents and teachers as well. That is my point. How can we provide better education and have more students. Like the member for York Mills was saying, we have to get more students with better education. This is why we are going to get fewer students with less education, because they won't be able to —

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Would you check and see if there's a quorum.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Yorkview.

Mr Sergio: I will continue for the next minute or so and try to wrap it up. The main points here for consideration really do not change. Yes, reform in some areas is needed, some changes are needed, but everybody has been telling the Premier and the Minister of Education that this is not the way to provide better education. The funding formula is another major problem, and they haven't been listening. That is one of the cornerstones.

As I said in the House the other day, since the beginning schools, together with churches, have always been a cornerstone of every community. Schools have been functioning as the get-together, the community centre, the learning centre, and that's where parents would go in support of the system, in support of the students, in support of running programs for the kids and stuff like that.

What we see here is a total dismantling of the education system as we used to know it, and it's causing such a huge effect that it will be impossible for this government to fix it. Not only can't they fix it; they don't know how to fix it. They are making too many mistakes. I hope they will reconsider prior to finalizing this particular piece of legislation.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 63. I'd like to remind members of the House and those listening that Bill 63 is an attempt once again to try to fix mistakes that were made in a piece of government legislation, and that legislation specifically was Bill 160.

The government is fond of trying to confuse Bill 160 with a number of other issues. The government would have people believe that Bill 160 has to do with standardized testing, with standardized report cards, and it doesn't. The government would have the public believe that Bill 160 has to do with classrooms, and it does indirectly because what it does is it cuts classroom funding, period, full stop, and there's no in between on that issue. It cuts classroom funding in a variety of ways. It tries to define issues like instructional time, and in the original bill they missed the boat.

What it does at its core — it doesn't talk about how well our kids do in math, how good our kids' reading standards are. It doesn't talk about how well our teachers teach. It deals with how our school boards are funded, it deals with who funds what, it deals with issues that really have an indirect impact on the classroom, but a very important indirect impact.

I want to take a few minutes to talk about the shortcomings of this particular bill, and this particular bill being Bill 160. Bill 63, again, is here to try and correct or clarify sections of Bill 160.

The government's funding formula is having a direct impact on communities right across this province. In my hometown, in my community, four schools are actively being looked at for closure. Two of those are in my riding: Walkerville and W.D. Lowe. I'd like to say just a couple of words about what this means. This means, in the particular cases of Walkerville and Lowe, that if one or both of those schools were to be closed, there would be no high school left in downtown Windsor. There would be no high school left to serve those inner-city neighbourhoods. There would be schools on the periphery that are excellent schools, that are outstanding schools, but it would mean unequivocally that there would be no downtown school.

Walkerville Collegiate offers what is in the view of most people, including experts in education, one of the most outstanding centres for creative arts, the Windsor

Centre for Creative Arts. Our local school board a number of years ago, in trying to find cost savings, began putting programs like that into schools to protect their enrolment, to help ensure that they would maintain an enrolment base that would allow them to continue to operate. W.D. Lowe has a great history and tradition in our community in terms of technical programs especially and, more recently, in English as a second language. I believe there are close to 30 language groups represented in that particular school.

I have attended with the community group representing Lowe before the school board. I have heard from parents at Walkerville. I have heard from parents at Western. Make no mistake, this government has a planned, deliberate policy to take teachers out of classrooms and to close schools.

The government likes to talk about, "What do you stand for?" The government would say, "What would you do?" Let me tell you, whatever we do, we won't try to hide it and we won't try to conceal it, which is exactly what this government's doing. I took the analysis from our school boards about how they're coming up with these decisions and how the formula works and, quite frankly, you'd have to be a Philadelphia lawyer or a Toronto lawyer to really understand it. This is a deliberate attempt by the government to take the focus of this debate away from the Legislature and put it on our local school boards. In fact, when you go through these numbers carefully, there's one handprint that comes through loud and clear: It's the handprint of the Harris government; it's the fingers of the Minister of Education.

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You've got a situation in our area where the funding formula yields actual costs of less than half for things like principals. It is an absolute joke — an absolute joke. What are we left with? We're left with a government that through this bill is acknowledging a major flaw in its own legislation. We are left with a government that won't accept responsibility for what it's doing; a government that would pit one school against another; a government that would have you believe these are local decisions. You know what? When our policy is defined, when we take steps, we won't be afraid to say what the policy is and we won't take steps to hide it. That's what you've done. You're not assuming responsibility; you're passing the buck.

The group of parents at one of our schools at Walkerville — I'd like to just take a moment to review a few I thought very good words about what they have recommended on how to deal with this. These parents want to make sure, as we in the opposition do, that we make the best use of our education dollars. Unlike the Harris government, they want to be sure that dollars go into classrooms. The government has given us a funding formula that doesn't do that.

Let me read to you the words they've submitted to the board so that you'll understand where they're coming from.

"We urge the board to undertake an extensive and fundamental review of its physical plant capacity, the cost

of making renovations to permit rental of excess space to businesses and organizations, the reallocation or transfer of specific programs to create centres of excellence and the relocation of overcrowded elementary schools."

What they're saying and what they've said to me directly is, "There's a better way of doing it that will allow us to keep our schools open."

When the government opens debate on Bill 160 again to clarify what it means by instructional time, it reminds us in the opposition of all the flaws in the bill and it reminds us in the opposition that, no matter where you stand, you ought to be prepared to stand truthfully behind it and in an open fashion.

This government does stand for something. It stands for closed schools. It stands for worse education, not better education. It stands for picking on teachers as an easy political target. That's no way to conduct educational policy, and I would submit to the government if you were intent on really making our schools better, you'd own up to this instead of pitting one community against another; instead of closing rural schools in communities where they don't have them; instead of closing urban schools in decaying downtown cores where those schools are needed to attract new residents; in terms of reflecting what is needed across a system of education. There are ways of doing that, a lot of ways. One of our proposals is centres of excellence in schools. These parents at Walkerville are saying precisely that.

I say to the government, Bill 63 attempts to correct a problem in your own legislation, Bill 160, a piece of legislation that is rife with mistakes but that at its core undermines the quality of education we can offer our kids, does so in a manner that jeopardizes certain parts of this province over others and creates division and misunderstanding, and it's something that ought to be repealed. It's something that ought not to be allowed to go forward.

Let's work together to make sure we have better schools, better instruction. Teachers want that. Parents want that. Kids want that. The official opposition wants that. We'll change it next year when we get the chance to do so.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I would like to join my colleagues in the Liberal caucus today in trying to shed some light on the weaknesses of this bill and what I believe the public, parents and students need to know. I would like to focus on two areas.

What is the definition that the government uses in terms of instructional time? In its simplistic manner, in its ads that are paid for by the people of Ontario, to try and simplify a complex issue it says, "All we're asking is for teachers to spend 25 more minutes in the classroom." In fact, all the teachers agreed. They have no problem with that. They said, "We're prepared to spend 25 more minutes in the classroom," and there were some discussions.

If the government was so sincere in simply finding another 25 minutes of instructional time for teachers, the teachers would have agreed. Why not add an extra five

minutes to the courses they already teach, or another seven minutes or whatever it is? But no, because that would not solve the underlying reason why this legislation is here in the first place.

It really is all about the government trying to cut costs. How do they cut costs? Of course, they cut teachers. While the minister goes on to say that we have hundreds of teachers, thousands of teachers who are being hired by boards, he must know that these are replacement positions of people who have retired or who were discouraged and got out of teaching — what a shame — and that there is a net deficit. In other words, we have fewer teachers now teaching in Ontario, with an enrolment which increases every year. Does that lead to quality? I say no, I don't believe it does.

What people need to know as well is that in some provinces teachers don't fill in for absent co-workers as they do in Ontario, or supervise halls and cafeterias as our teachers do. Ontario refuses to count guidance as part of legitimate instruction with a student. You can quibble with words, you can quibble with concepts, but I will tell you, if it were not for the fine work of our guidance counselors, there would be many students, including perhaps some of our members in this House, who would probably not have completed their high school at that particular time or completed school, period.

Library duty as teaching: What do we have now? The school where my wife teaches: no librarian, no gym teacher, no vice-principal. All of those extra supports gone. Not recognized as legitimate parts of the relationship that teachers have with the students.

Gail Nyberg, the chair of the Toronto District School Board, said, "The government's analysis of the situation is misleading and leads to a debate that doesn't mean anything. Anybody who thinks a teacher is only working when they're standing in front of the classroom hasn't been in the classroom for very long," she says. "It's like saying that a lawyer is only working when the lawyer is in court, or it's like saying that an MPP or an MP is only working when they're in the House. That's ridiculous. How many people in doing their job need to prepare? Most people do." That's not appreciated, it's not recognized.

It's not just 25 minutes we're talking about. We're talking perhaps another 75 minutes plus the added marking, plus the added preparation, plus the added research with the new curriculum etc, which is not recognized. I think we will pay for this. When you demoralize a whole profession, we will pay for this. Most of the teachers out there are excellent teachers, have given their time freely, and now you push them to the wall. Do you expect that they're going to want to give the best of themselves? In spite of this government's efforts, I think most of them will, but I think the people of Ontario should know the truth. The truth is that the bottom line is that the government is looking for money and one way to do that is to cut teachers and one way to do that is to ask a smaller number of them to take on more time.

1700

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I am pleased to follow on the comments made by the member for Ottawa Centre, who I think has been bang on with his description of what this piece of legislation is actually trying to do.

Bill 63 is, as we all know, an outcome of Bill 160. It purports to simply add more instructional time. If members were following what the honourable member for Ottawa Centre was speaking of, they would have discovered that those ads the government has placed that show a clock just ticking 25 minutes more are totally misleading as to what's actually happening in the classroom, in the school. Who here truly believes that a teacher only teaches for four hours and 10 minutes? Nobody believes that. But that's instruction time.

So what does the teacher do with the balance of the time? Besides preparing for lessons, which is very important, there is marking and grading the students. Because we're dealing with three or sometimes even four classes, that's four sets of individual children that have to be monitored, that have to have individual lesson plans that the teacher has to worry about.

There's Johnny, who's going a little bit slower, or Jane, who's reaching ahead. "How am I going to keep Jane occupied and make sure she stays focused on the lesson plan?" And all the other things. There's Mohammed, who's having some difficulty grasping concepts, and Tibor, who's way ahead if he only could understand what he was talking about — all these differences. We are dealing with a situation in our classes that is quite a challenge. We don't have a homogeneous society; we have a multicultural, multilingual society, people coming from many different socio-economic backgrounds. The teachers are there with new curriculum. They have to devise lesson plans almost on the fly as this government, day by day, is changing its mind about what should happen in the classroom.

You have to be a parent. I'm a parent of three children, and I want to talk about Woodroffe High School, because I was a parent of a son who went through Woodroffe High School as an Ontario scholar. I was a member of the school advisory committee, and I had the added benefit of having served on the school board for some six years.

Woodroffe High School has about 900 students. It's at about 80% capacity. It has a child care centre that is sponsored in part by Variety Club. Young mothers wanting to go back to school can leave their children there and go in and get caught up on their education so they can contribute to society and not become a drain on our community. Of course, with this extra space, I'll talk about space requirements in a moment.

But what has happened to this high school as a result of this government's funding formula, this government's education policies? When this government came into power in 1995, what was the first thing it did? It announced that it was going to change the whole secondary school system. Everyone said, "OK, about time." Everyone, believe it or not, is an expert on education. But only 70% of taxpayers actually have children in school. What did the government

do? They made permanent the \$425-million cut under the social contract that the NDP brought in when they formed the government. All those positions, all those support personnel, all that comes out in terms of positions, because 80% of any school board's expenditure is on people. People provide the service for our kids.

Then they took out another \$533 million from the system, across all of Ontario. Then they came in with Bill 160, with its new funding formula, and what happened in Ottawa-Carleton? If you were a taxpayer in Ottawa and were sending your child to Woodroffe High School, you would find fewer teachers, fewer speech pathologists, fewer librarians, fewer custodial staff to clean up the mess after some kid has been sick in the day or what have you, less secretarial help to take the message from the mother who wants to make sure her daughter is taking her medication, because she left it at home. No gym teacher. They've lost a vice-principal. The principal has to spend all her time out patrolling the halls because, even though it is Ottawa West, this is an inner-city school with all the inner-city tensions you have.

As a result, the principal is not able to give enough leadership time, the teachers are swamped right off their feet trying to deal with all these changes and the new curriculum, and you're telling them that they have to provide more instructional time. Well, they would do that, but do you know that not one student is going to benefit in terms of being taught more as a result of this bill? Their learning time does not increase by 25 minutes, not at all. What happens is that their teacher is going to come in less prepared, less able to deal with their problems because that teacher now has more kids to look after and less time to do a good job. That is what happens.

For the taxpayer who does not have children in the school, what happens to them? They're paying more property tax. Can you believe it? The government takes the education portion of property tax and then downloads on to the municipalities, the regional government puts in a tax freeze, the city government puts in a tax freeze, yet the city of Ottawa ratepayer ends up paying more property tax. Why? Because when the province levies its property tax, it's levying the province-wide average. In Ottawa-Carleton, it was a local board taking advantage of local assessment to provide local programs that dealt with their inner-city schools, our special-education needs, our French immersion needs, English as a second language. We are a cosmopolitan community in Ottawa-Carleton, the fourth-largest in Canada.

So, what happens is that the Minister of Finance now puts down this province-wide levy for the taxpayers of Ottawa-Carleton and they're paying more. They're getting less service and paying more money. It is astounding, and it's actually going to come home to roost, because throughout all of Ottawa-Carleton, with all the smoke-screen of property reassessment and downloading and Bill 160 and the new funding formula, the whole bit, 60% of residential taxpayers are seeing their taxes go up. They're seeing less service: less service at the municipality, less

service at their hospitals and now less service at their schools. And we haven't even finished.

From 1982 to 1988 I served as a school board trustee, and I'm proud to say it. I was elected by my community and I was given a mandate to provide good quality education at a reasonable cost, and we tried to do that. But the government of the day, whether it be Conservative, Liberal or later on NDP, kept on cutting and cutting funding. First it was Bill 82, which obligated school boards to provide special services for students in need. That's fine, but there were no additional resources. We had to go back to the taxpayer. Then there was the extension of separate school funding and the loss of a tax base. We just had to cope with that, and we had to go back to the taxpayer. Then there was the foundation of the French-language school board.

This was all well and good, but there was no transitional funding, no help. Go back to the taxpayers. Obviously, and the government has cashed in on this big time, the government said, "Look, you're going to have to go back to the taxpayer." We did and we had higher-than-average tax increases. Then this government turns around and says, "Those irresponsible school boards." Here we are providing as much service as we can to community standards, yet we had to go back to the taxpayer. As a matter of fact, the Ottawa Board of Education, which I served on, was 100% free of provincial funding. We were totally based on the tax base and we knew it and acted accordingly.

But now the government comes in and takes control of all that. What happens now? Do you call your trustee and say: "My son needs help. The teachers say he's got attention deficit disorder. Can you now provide him a teacher's aide?" The trustee says: "The funding formula only gives me so many, and I've got all those kids plus more, because we've had enrolment growth. I can't provide as many as I did before. My hands are tied. We've had to lay off speech pathologists because the government won't give us the money to meet the community need. We've had to lay off social workers because the government won't give us the money to meet the community need. English as a second language? We don't have that money any more. We can't do this."

So what happens? The teachers, whom you want to give more responsibility, already have their hands full, with less support coming from the board, less support coming from the taxpayer, who is willing to pay for it in Ottawa-Carleton, and now having to deal with new curriculum. All of this, and you're saying that more has to be done. I'm sorry, there are limits to all of this.

Then there's the wholly bogus notion that class size is capped. One thing I understand — having served six years on a collective bargaining committee, where we did settle at the table, and we tried to make sure we knew what was going on in the rest of the province but we also knew how deep the pockets were in Ottawa-Carleton — is what class size, average class size, school average class size, system-wide average class size, what all that means. For many parents, having bought into this expensive propaganda

campaign the government has put over radio and television and in the newspapers, the reality is not matching the government's rhetoric. If there was ever a need for truth in advertising, it's here, it's with this government, because this government is giving less service at higher cost.

1710

Are class sizes capped? Not at all. As a matter of fact, this government's class size that is put into Bill 160 is higher than the class size average that the Ottawa board, the Carleton board, now the Ottawa-Carleton district board, had in place. But your funding is cut to what you said is supposed to be there in Bill 160. What does that mean? That means that we lose teachers. That means that class size actually rises in Ottawa-Carleton. What was that again? Less service, more cost?

Do you think the taxpayers in Ottawa-Carleton are going to appreciate the fact that they're paying more and getting less? Do you think the parents, who after all heard the government say, "We will not touch classroom spending" — why are there fewer teachers' aides for special-needs kids? Why are there fewer speech pathologists? Why did the principal of Woodroffe High School break her wrist because they couldn't get the floor cleaned because there's not enough custodial staff? On and on it goes. I'm sorry, the rhetoric does not meet reality whatsoever.

To add insult to injury, here is this very expensive \$2-million advertising campaign with that clock, saying: "All we're asking for is 25 minutes more. Is that a lot to ask for?" Just think. That working day is a fixed day. That teacher is there all that day, from morning to late afternoon, often early into the evening. If they're teaching more of that time — and, remember, students aren't getting 25 minutes more; it's that teacher providing that effort — what is being given up? It's not lunch, it's not coffee break. What was the teacher doing? It wasn't the football program after school or the drama class after school or the school concert. What was that teacher doing? What do you think happens to poor Johnny or poor Jane or poor Mohammed or poor Tibor when they need that help and that teacher does not have sufficient time to meet these kids' needs? We thought in the school system that quality of education meant that we were able to meet the individual needs of kids because kids are not the same. They learn differently, they come from different backgrounds.

Two weeks ago I was at the opening of the national breakfast program. It was school program breakfast week across Canada. We always think of this as an elementary school thing. I have to tell you that indeed there are high schools where kids come hungry, and when kids come to school hungry they don't concentrate, they can't do their work properly, they fall behind, they end up becoming dropouts, the whole bit. Who picks up the slack on these things? When someone comes in in minus 15 degree weather and they've only come with a sweater and sweat pants and that's it, who picks up the slack?

When they don't have their books — oh, my Lord, they don't have their books. Do you realize there's a new tax in

our system? Do you know if you go to the separate school system now you're expected to pony up 100 bucks, 120 bucks at the beginning of the year right away as an activity fee because the school board, because of this government's funding formula, can't provide all these books and all the materials and supplies they need? That's a user fee, and what does Mike Harris describe a user fee as? Another tax.

I am appalled by the \$2 million that's spent on these ads. I'm appalled by the fact that this government has spent over \$6 million since the fall of last year: Putting Students First, which was an electronic and print media campaign, \$1 million; the response to teacher ads during Bill 160, \$1.3 million; the funding formula ads in this spring of \$800,000; the propaganda of \$700,000; the growth chart, all of these things. You know, \$5 million would build another high school out in Trinity, out in Stittsville, out in Goulbourn, out in south Nepean. You know what? The one that's being built in Stittsville was put in place by Liberals. They are the ones who put that in place.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Wildman: I was just looking through this document, and I listened to my friends from the Liberal caucus make their presentations. They listed a number of the problems that we're facing in education today as a result of the changes this government has wrought. I know that all of us understand that the reason for the serious turmoil and dislocation in students' education in Ontario today is the fact that this government, the Conservative government, has taken millions of dollars out of the education system.

The government made it very clear that they were going to take money out. They claim they were only going to take money out of administration. They redefined the classroom so it doesn't include things like junior kindergarten, adult education, heat and light, cleaning. It doesn't include anything that everyone understands is part of classroom education. Then they say, "OK, now we've increased the funding to classroom education." Of course they don't pay for the heat and the light and they don't pay for the cleaning and so on. But they say they've increased it.

It's obvious that if we are going to reverse the damage this government has done to education, we're going to have to not just redefine what classroom education is, we're going to have to reinvest in education; we're going to have to put money back that this government has taken out.

The reason I was looking in this document was to find out how the Liberals intend to get the money to reinvest in the education system. The government has taken about a billion dollars out of the education of our students in Ontario. They've got fewer teachers, fewer programs and we need to find the money. We think that means you have to do something about that tax cut this government has given to the rich.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I'd like to commend my colleague the member for Essex South. At the outset he

certainly made some thoughtful remarks on these issues and on the education issues affecting his constituency. I did want to spend more time, though, dealing with the remarks of the member for Windsor-Walkerville and the member for Yorkview.

The member for Yorkview asked where were the parents we're listening to. He couldn't find one single parent who was supporting the education reforms. I did a constituency survey and I happen to have a few here so that I could perhaps go back:

"Bill 160 is right on. Do not get into the teachers' union," from someone on Forestview Crescent who wrote in.

Another individual, "I believe the Harris government is on the right track in addressing education." That one is from Banner Road in Nepean.

"Carry on the good work," from Townsend Drive.

"Keep on the same track. Don't let the unions and the media distract you from your good work," from someone from Hadley Circle.

"Keep up the great work," from Bellman Drive.

These folks are obviously writing in to support the government's agenda.

The member for Windsor-Walkerville, when he made his remarks, said that the Liberal Party would not be afraid to state what its policy is. I want to go on record as being completely in agreement with the member for Windsor-Walkerville. The Liberal Party doesn't mind stating what its policies were. Just last week I read about all three policies they had on education. The story from the Toronto Sun said, "Grits don't know where they stand."

We had Lyn McLeod first give her statement on education and then Joe Cordiano, another member, completely contradicted everything that Lyn McLeod said on education. Then Gerry Phillips had to step in as the new deputy leader — he replaced Joe Cordiano — completely contradicting what his other two colleagues had said. But the good news: Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty wasn't available for comment.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): First of all, I want to congratulate the members for Essex South, Yorkview, Windsor-Walkerville, Ottawa Centre and Ottawa West for their speeches.

Mes collègues vous ont livré les inquiétudes de nos enseignants et enseignantes, de nos étudiants et étudiantes, de nos conseils d'école, de nos conseils scolaires, et de la majorité des parents et même des grands-parents qui sont inquiets de les leurs. Le gouvernement a procédé encore une fois avec des changements majeurs en éducation sans analyser l'impact qu'il y aura dans notre système scolaire, dans nos communautés, surtout celles du secteur rural.

Avec les coupures budgétaires que nous connaissons surtout dans le système d'éducation, nous allons voir disparaître nos bibliothécaires — les bibliothécaires en partie, certainement — nos enseignants et enseignantes en éducation physique, dans le secteur de la musique, dans l'éducation spécialisée. Souvent, nous allons perdre du personnel qui était en place pour faire la surveillance le midi. Maintenant, ils devront préparer leurs prochaines

études afin de pouvoir consacrer leur temps dans l'éducation physique et aussi dans les sports.

Les coupures ont déjà frappé très dur dans ma circonscription. Tout récemment, la directrice de l'école secondaire de Vankleek Hill a été informée que, à compter du 1^{er} octobre, mercredi dernier, les frais d'utilisateur étaient en force. Avec cette nouvelle directive, nous avons immédiatement perdu un organisme qui était en place depuis 99 ans.

1720

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have been in my office listening to this debate and it's quite clear, from the number of Liberals who were so urgently wanting to speak to this bill in third reading, that they share the concern of constituents across the province about this bill. I can tell you that many of our members would like to have been able to speak this afternoon too but unfortunately were refused permission to have equal time in the debate. We certainly need to be very clear that this is a matter that is of urgent concern to us as well.

It is very clear that the Liberals are stating all their concerns and their complaints about what the government is doing. It is not as clear to me what they suggest as a positive alternative, nor is it clear to me how they're going to restore the kinds of concerns that people are listing. I think the people of Ontario want to know, first of all, positive suggestions from us all and also some clarity around how we would pay for an alternative way of doing things.

Our party has been very open and very clear about what we see as the alternatives. We believe that the government has taken so much money out of the system that we must reinvest more dollars. The leader of the Liberal Party made it very clear in a speech not long ago that, given the worsening financial situation, the best he could promise to the people of Ontario was that he would put walls around the funding that already exists for education and health care. That's just not going to be good enough for most of the people of Ontario who know that more money needs to be invested.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Yorkview has two minutes to respond.

Mr Sergio: Just to wrap it up on behalf of my colleagues, I want to thank the members for London Centre, Prescott and Russell, Nepean and Algoma as well.

First of all I want to correct the member for Nepean: I didn't speak with respect to various forms of the reform of education; I said I couldn't find one parent who came to me and said, "I am in favour of closing schools." To this day I can't find one parent who is in agreement with the government when it comes to school closings.

I think the aura in the House is permeated with politics. There must be an election coming up. Our position when it comes to education, health care and taxes is crystal-clear. You can twist it, you can turn it any way you want, but we have exposed our views in this House and they will not change. We will not change because of political reasons from the other parties.

What we are saying is that if you really mean it, Minister and Premier, and you want to provide the best education possible for our kids, then don't make any cuts. You cannot provide the best education with fewer teachers. You cannot provide better education with less funding, fewer teachers and more kids in the classroom. These are not just our views. We have said many times in this House, "Stop the funding cuts." I can still remember the Premier, when he was showing on TV: "Here is the envelope. No cuts to education." What did we have? A billion: fewer teachers, less support, less education. That is not our way.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Algoma.

Mr Wildman: I will be speaking briefly. I'm going to split with our leader the time that is available to our caucus prior to the designated time according to the time allocation motion for the vote on third reading.

I said in the debate yesterday how much I regretted that the government chose to time-allocate Bill 63, because at the time they brought forward the time allocation motion we had reached that point, according to the rules, where members could only speak for 10 minutes. Even if all the opposition members who had not yet spoken on the second reading of Bill 63 had spoken, they would only have had 10 minutes each and it wouldn't have taken us very long to exhaust the time required, and there was no need for a time allocation motion.

But as I said in the debate yesterday, unfortunately for this government, even with those new rules it has become routine to time-allocate on important bills, to cut off debate and to ensure that the matter goes through complete second reading quickly and goes to third reading for a very short debate without going to committee, so it's impossible for there to be amendments. It's as if this government believes that any bill they draft is beyond improvement, that there is no need to have any amendments put forward in a committee, no need for clause-by-clause debate on a bill. It's regrettable.

Members will recall that it was my leader who got up in the House when we first came back into session and the government introduced the so-called back-to-school or back-to-work legislation for the eight boards where there were disruptions, lockouts and strikes, and suggested that the bill be severed, that the portion of the bill that did not deal specifically with those disputes but dealt with issues around instructional time and definition of "instruction" be taken out of the bill and introduced as a separate piece of legislation. That would then make it possible for the back-to-work legislation to be debated and voted on expeditiously, even though we opposed it, and then we would have a longer time to debate the issues around instructional time, the definitions that this government brought in.

The government agreed to do that. They immediately introduced the severed bill on instructional time and immediately proceeded with debate, which was fine. But not the reasoned debate that we had hoped for; rather a rushed, time-allocated debate, a truncated debate that

doesn't make it possible for us all to participate in a way that is required if we're going to properly represent our constituents — the parents, the students, the teachers, the boards, the ratepayers, the taxpayers of Ontario — on this very important issue around instructional time that has caused so much dispute and controversy in Ontario.

In the short time I have for this third reading debate, I want to put on the record an issue that has not been canvassed in our debate on this bill. That is a particular one as it relates to the new district francophone boards, the French-language boards in Ontario. I have a letter that I will read in translation into the record from the president of the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, the AEFO, Diane Chénier, who represents the francophone teachers of Ontario.

1730

Just to put it in context before I read it into the record, members will know that, as a result of the reforms in the education field, new district French-language boards were established in Ontario, enormous boards covering very large territories. These boards did not exist until the beginning of September. They were just getting organized at the beginning of September. They were hiring their administrative staff, their principals, vice-principals. They were in disputes and discussions with the existing boards over the division of assets and liabilities. There were all these matters of reorganization and getting set up. It was impossible for the AEFO, representing the French-language teachers of Ontario, to negotiate with the new francophone boards before the beginning of September — they didn't exist — so those negotiations just started.

Interestingly enough, the minister, in intervening in collective bargaining, said that if new district boards and teachers' organizations could reach collective agreements that dealt with instructional time, they could stay in place and they would not be legislated against by this government. That put the francophones at a disadvantage. Unlike the other English Catholic and English public boards that had been negotiating through the summer, they hadn't been involved in those negotiations.

Those other negotiations were difficult as it was, and most of those boards and teacher organizations were not able to reach agreements, but the French-language boards and their teachers had no chance to do that and so they were put at a disadvantage because now we have this legislation before the House, which is going to legislate the instructional time issue before any of these boards — and they've agreed to negotiate together across the province — can reach any kind of agreement. They're not likely to reach agreements until the end of this calendar year, I would think.

So I want to put this letter on the record. This is written to the Minister of Education and Training:

"Dear Minister:

"AEFO is disappointed to note how rapidly your government reintroduced Bill 63.

"I will not talk about the outrageous augmentation of the workload, or of the unfortunate intervention of your government in collective bargaining, but only of the

impact of your bill on the negotiations in French-language schools.

"Negotiations with French-language school boards could not begin before September 1998, after the boards were effectively in place. What's more, several of these boards didn't have any administrative staff on duty and that postponed negotiations. When in some places we have to integrate up to 12 different collective agreements, it goes without saying that the process takes longer in our boards than in the English-language boards.

"AEFO, like the school boards, finally decided to put in place a centralized bargaining structure, to ensure stability in French-language schools for the fall 1998 session as well as a clear and innovative process to deal with disagreements.

"Your Bill 63 puts this process at risk and discriminates towards francophones. If you cannot cancel Bill 63 to remove discriminatory elements towards francophones, at least postpone royal assent to September 1999. We then would have the time to adjust.

"Respectfully yours,

"The President,

"Diane Chénier."

I ask the government to respond to this even at this late hour.

This government has rushed through an issue of time of instruction, a definition of what instructional time is. It hasn't given anyone, francophone or anglophone, in this province an opportunity to deal properly with the issue. The issue is not 25 more minutes — "Is that all we have to ask?" as the Tory ads say — the issue is requiring teachers to teach an additional class, 25 more students, with less time to prepare, less time with individual students, less time to give remedial assistance, less time for extracurricular activities and less possibility of a good quality of education for our students in Ontario.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I want to add my comments to what is going on here as well. First of all, let me say that this is one more turn of the vice that this government has used to grip Ontario's education system. It is one more piece in the centralization of all control of our children's education. It is another attempt to tie the hands of local school boards and locally elected trustees. The real purpose is to make it impossible for boards to have any flexibility in their negotiations with secondary school teachers.

This has to be placed in the context of what this government has done already. This is a government that said they were going to create a crisis in education. They said that three years ago. This is a government that has already taken \$1 billion out of our elementary and secondary schools. This is a government, frankly, that destroyed all of the existing collective agreements as of August 31 of this year, put school boards in a situation where they would literally be facing chaos in terms of having teachers in the schools, in the classrooms, having support staff in the schools, without having any contracts governing the working relationships. A government would only create that scenario if it were absolutely intent,

absolutely committed to creating chaos, as this government has.

Now this government that has created chaos in the classroom, that has created chaos in our schools, is going to go about the province closing hundreds of schools, wants to have yet further power over the classroom, wants to have further power to make centralized decisions about our children's educational prospects and our children's educational experience. It is really quite an incredible scenario that is shaping up here. What is perhaps one of the most dynamic of activities in terms of an individual life, an activity which requires all sorts of inputs on the spot, all sorts of recognition of an individual's capacity, an individual's needs, this government further seeks to centralize control over.

What's going to be the outcome of this? Further chaos in the schools; further chaos in the educational experience of our children. At a time when education is more important to our individual prospects, to our social prospects, more important in terms of the social success of this province and the economic success of this province, we have a government that is intent upon creating yet more chaos in our children's classrooms.

I don't have to say that we're fundamentally opposed to what the government is trying to do here. On the face of it, any rational person would be fundamentally opposed to what the government is trying to do. But it goes further than that, because if you actually sit down and read the definitions that the government is trying to put in place here, if you actually look at the interpretation that the government is trying to put in place, it leaves out all sorts of scenarios, and frankly it's going to create, as I say, yet more confusion out there.

The definition doesn't even deal with all of the mandated programs. For example, we have libraries in our schools. Those libraries have to be supervised. Teachers have to be involved in that supervision. That's not covered. So I have to ask the question, if a teacher takes a class to the school library for the purpose of selecting books and for the purpose of reading some of those books and for the purpose of doing research in some of those books, is that not counted as instructional time? I thought that there was some importance placed around the reading of books, the selection of books, doing research from books, doing research in a library setting, but apparently that's not instructional time in Ontario.

1740

Guidance programs: Everyone knows that children, students, especially adolescent students in a high school setting, face more and more difficult choices and more and more difficult challenges in terms of course selection and in terms of making thoughtful judgments about where they want to go, what courses they want to take and what their interests may be.

Mr Wildman: Life choices.

Mr Hampton: Life choices. So guidance is a very important part of the school life of adolescents in our high schools. One would have thought that guidance, time taken for guidance, time taken to counsel young students about

their choices, about their options, about where these options and choices will lead, would be included as instructional time. But lo and behold, there is no mention of guidance, so it would appear, in the Conservative vision of Ontario, that guidance time, the time taken to sit down and talk to students about their choices, about their options, isn't important. That's not instructional time.

Then there's the issue of supervision, supervision in the hallway. Let us take supervision of students when they're leaving school, they're getting on school buses; supervision of students when they come into the school in the morning. One would have thought that the supervision of students in the school, the supervision of students between classes, would also have taken some part in instructional time or would have been considered important enough. But lo and behold, that is not part of this either.

Then there's the issue of what happens if a teacher picks up another class for another teacher. It's not unusual in the dynamic world of school and education that some teachers may not be available to teach a class for which they have been scheduled. It may be a family emergency, it may be a medical issue, it may be some other issue. Another teacher will come in and pick up that time for them. I would have thought that that would have been counted as instructional time, but apparently, in the Conservative vision of Ontario, taking another class for another teacher is not going to be counted as instructional time.

If these aren't important issues, if these kinds of things aren't important issues, then what really lies at the heart of this bill? What is at the heart of this bill? I can say it's obvious that what really counts here is the government is putting together a template which will result in taking more teachers out of the schools. This is nothing more than a template to create a scenario whereby fewer teachers deal with more students in a compressed time frame. That's what it's all about.

The maths may go right over the heads of the wiseheimers over here in the Conservative benches but the reality is, if you have fewer teachers dealing with more students in a compressed time zone, it means less time for each student. It means students won't be getting a quality education. Students will be, in effect, getting less quality time, less time with teachers, less mentoring time.

This is all about treating students as if they're widgets. You force as many as you can into a classroom. You take out as many teachers as you can and then you say, "Presto, this is education." Well, this is not education, this is warehousing. This is not creating quality learning opportunities, this is treating students as if they are some sort of a manufacturing process. This is not going to result in quality education in any shape, any form, any way.

What it will do is allow this government to get rid of literally thousands of teachers across the province. It will allow this government to then take that money and use it to finance what is their real priority in this province: to take that money and finance their income tax scheme, an

income tax scheme that at the end of the day only benefits the wealthiest people in this province.

The new equation runs like this: Students get less. Students get less quality time, students have less access to teachers, students get fewer extracurricular activities, schools have less money, classrooms have less money so that the Conservative government can finance their income tax scheme to benefit the 5% or 6% at the top of the wealth and income ladder in this province. That's the real priority of this government. When you cut through it all, that's what is really involved here.

This is not a case of going a little too fast, a little too far. This is a case of a government that has the wrong priorities. At a time when education is more important for individual success and for our success as a province, this is a government that is making the wrong decision, a government that has the wrong priorities, a government that's going in the wrong direction.

I want to be very clear with this government, and I especially want to be clear with the people of Ontario. New Democrats are absolutely committed to the rolling back of this income tax scheme as it pertains to the 6% at the top and taking the \$2 billion that you get when you roll back that income tax scheme and putting that \$2 billion back in the classroom where it will do the most good for the most people in our society. I just want to point out —

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: Some of the Liberals are upset at that statement because they want people to believe that they can reinvest in education and they can cement the Harris income tax scheme in place at the same time. I say to my colleagues in the Liberal Party, stop talking out of both sides of your mouth. It didn't work in Nickel Belt; it won't work anywhere else.

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: The Liberal Party is really upset now.

I'd like to get back to the issue of education. In British Columbia —

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Hampton: I gather some of the Liberals want to say something about their endorsement of the Harris income tax scheme.

Interjections.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Do you want a bumper sticker that says you change your policy every day?

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member for Rainy River has the floor. I'd like to hear him and you should.

Mr Hampton: The Liberal Party must really have a problem here. I'm trying to point out what the Harris government is really doing. They're taking money out of the classroom to finance an income tax scheme. Somehow the Liberal Party has a problem with that and I wonder what that problem could be.

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: If members of the Liberal Party want to get up and advocate on behalf of the Harris government's income tax scheme that is taking \$1 billion a year out of

our classrooms and is taking \$1 billion a year out of health care, then at some point they should get up and do that because the public wants to hear clearly from the Liberal Party.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Sudbury, come to order.

Mr Bradley: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Did I hear the words "social contract" from the leader of the NDP?

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Hampton: Frankly, I think the public wants to know where the priorities are. It's very clear where the Conservative priorities are: The Conservatives favour taking money out of schools, out of classrooms, to finance their income tax scheme.

I believe it's absolutely essential that people in Ontario understand clearly what this debate is about and where everyone stands in this debate. I make it very clear that we will roll back this income tax scheme, in particular for the 6% at the top who are the only people who benefit. That money ought to go back into education.

As for the Liberal Party, they will continue to try to have it both ways. They want to cement the Harris income tax scheme but they want to try to talk about educational reinvestment. Have you ever heard of the Grand Canyon? Have you ever heard about the English Channel? That's the position the Liberal Party of Ontario is now in.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Windsor-Walkerville, come to order.

Mr Hampton: Since I have reached the end of my time and more and more members of the Liberal Party are having a conniption, I will wrap up by saying this: The reality we face today is that education is the priority investment for this province. It is absolutely the investment we must make if we are going to be part of the 21st-century economy. Conservatives will not make that investment. In fact, they believe in de-investment in education. They believe in taking money out of education.

It's becoming very clear from the clatter we're hearing here in the background that Liberals will not make that investment either. They simply want to say to people, "Don't worry, we'll cement in place the cuts to education that Conservatives have already made."

It's absolutely clear that we must make these investments. These investments will better our position in terms of this knowledge economy. They will give our students the quality education they need if they're going to take part in this knowledge economy. It's a priority for New Democrats. It is a priority we accept, that we have to take money back out of this income tax scheme and we have to put it in the classroom. We have to make these investments and we will make these investments.

The centralization of control over education, centralization of control over the classroom is an experiment that is doomed to failure. These experiments have been tried elsewhere in the world. I believe everyone knows that this massive centralization doesn't work, never has worked

and is going to create the chaos in our education system that this government made their commitment to early on in their career. They have done nothing but further that crisis with every move they've taken in education since then.

This bill is wrong, wrong-headed, wrong direction, wrong result. We will change that.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 5, 1998, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Smith has moved third reading of Bill 63. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion the ayes have it.

Call in the members; there will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1755 to 1800.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 28(h), the chief government whip has requested that the vote on Bill 63, instructional time, be deferred until Wednesday, October 7, 1998. So be it.

It being nearly 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 o'clock this afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1755.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Tuesday 6 October 1998

Mardi 6 octobre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 6 October 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 6 octobre 1998

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

APPRENTICESHIP AND CERTIFICATION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998

SUR L'APPRENTISSAGE ET LA RECONNAISSANCE PROFESSIONNELLE

Mr Smith, on behalf of Mr David Johnson, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to revise the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act / Projet de loi 55, Loi révisant la Loi sur la qualification professionnelle et l'apprentissage des gens de métier.

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): I want to say at the outset that I'll be splitting my one-hour allocation of time with my colleagues from Quinte and Simcoe Centre. They'll be joining me in the debate this evening.

I wanted to start by saying I'm pleased to have the opportunity to move second reading of Bill 55, An Act to revise the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act. If passed by the Legislature, Bill 55 —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I don't see a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Clerk, could you check to see if there's a quorum, please.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Call in the members, please.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Middlesex.

Mr Smith: As I indicated, if passed by the Legislature, Bill 55 would encourage more employers to train and encourage greater industry input in terms of establishing and setting standards for apprenticeship. It would allow apprenticeship training to expand to new jobs in emerging sectors, including high technology, and complement the ministry's goal to encourage more young people to have excellent workplace skills and development opportunities before graduating from high school and following their high school career into the post-secondary level.

Equally important, it provides the opportunity for greater flexibility with respect to skills training in the

province of Ontario. In that context, Bill 55 would help us to achieve and also at the same time ensure that we have excellence in our apprenticeship training, to ensure that the quality that exists today is not in any way reduced or compromised and that we continue to build, establish and pursue opportunities for successful training programs, such as those that have been found in the construction industry, which is a significant sector with respect to the training field in this province. Most importantly, it will allow us to continue to pursue and establish high standards of quality and safety in the interests of employers, employees and consumers in this province, who want to be assured that our skilled labourers are receiving the training necessary to ensure that safety mechanisms are being realized, whether it's at home or at work.

It's in that context the government believes strongly that apprenticeship training should remain in the workplace, where it belongs. It should remain based along training standards set by industry. Certainly it is consistent with the government's commitment to ensure that training is one of the highest-quality initiatives that a young person, or for that matter a person who is seeking retraining, can pursue; to ensure that young people complete high school before completing their apprenticeships and at the same time to ensure that apprenticeship opportunities and awareness of opportunities in the skilled trades field have become more apparent to them and that as a government, perhaps as a society for that matter, we're taking greater responsibility to ensure that young people have a greater awareness of the very real, rewarding opportunities that exist for them in the areas of skilled trades and development.

Consultations have shown us that apprenticeship training is, quite frankly, not as widely known as one might think. Certainly it has also or provided us with the information necessary to draw conclusions that the system we have today is somewhat outmoded and inflexible in terms of the provisions that are currently established under existing legislation, which is some 30 years old. Very clearly, in the absence of reviewing that existing legislative framework, we will continue to have a training policy that isn't flexible, that isn't relevant to the current workplace and the needs and demands of both employers and employees in this province.

As I indicated at the outset, the government is very committed to involving industry, both employers and workers, in the context of the responsibilities they currently have under their provincial advisory committees, to look to those committees for greater input in terms of

establishing standards. In that context we will be well placed to promote careers in the trades, have the opportunity to share best practices and use those best practices as we continue to dedicate ourselves to improve training in this province.

The concept that this legislation captures is one that emphasizes the government's main focus, which is one whereby we must ensure the legislation is appropriate. As I indicated previously, we have apprenticeship and training legislation in this province that really hasn't been substantially revisited. We've had more or less a cookie-cutter approach to dealing with training issues for some time now. The government focus would allow a regulated training system to ensure that quality and, most importantly, safety is maintained in terms of the certifying of skills.

In terms of the feedback I have received from the many meetings I've been involved in with skilled workers in this province, I want to very clearly emphasize to the people of this province, to the Legislature this evening, that this legislation, Bill 55, in no way compromises the red seal program that currently exists in this province and elsewhere.

Apprenticeship would be stronger if unnecessary regulation was removed. In that context we wanted to ensure and encourage that more employers are training apprenticeships, to allow apprentices to progress at their own pace and to give consideration to the opportunity whereby we enable the prior experience of apprentices to be recognized when workers upgrade their skills or increase their employability by apprenticing to a new trade. We wanted to encourage the creation of new apprenticeship courses and new trades whereby we're seeing and witnessing in a meaningful way an apprenticeship system that is current and relevant to current standards and to the demand that workers and employers are expecting in this very important field.

There has been considerable discussion with respect to the apprenticeship reform initiative undertaken by this government, one that has led to a reasonably sound understanding by myself and others who were involved in this particular initiative of a process that my predecessor started; my colleague Toni Skarica from Wentworth North. I congratulate him for providing the consultative framework that we have continued with whereby we can ensure that all possible points of view are secured as we move forward with respect to the reforms proposed by this legislation.

Just to remind the Legislature and others where we've been over the course of the last almost two years now, in December 1996 the government announced a review of apprenticeship reform. At that time the Ministry of Education and Training released a discussion paper province-wide for the purposes of soliciting input from our skilled trades sectors, from apprentices, from employers and others who have an interest in this particular field, to solicit their input and perspective on where we need to go with respect to skills training in this province. Copies of the discussion paper were distributed to some 2,500

participants and were widely available beyond that initial distribution.

We received nearly 450 submissions with respect to this particular document from all major industries and from regions across this province. Whether it's found in southwestern Ontario, Metropolitan Toronto, eastern Ontario, Ottawa or northern Ontario, it's an issue that affects all of us, as all members will appreciate, as we have skilled tradespeople pursuing their career and craft in all of our communities in this province.

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We also, between myself and my colleague from Wentworth North as parliamentary assistants, have held some 16 different meetings with approximately 125 representatives from different groups across the province to meet with them personally, solicit their input and try to gain a better understanding about their particular skilled trade area. I want to compliment the people who have participated, both apprentice and skilled workers alike, and their union organizations. I want to compliment them for the focus. While we may not always agree at the end of the day on the issues, I want to compliment those people who to date have participated in the consultation process. It was very focused in terms of the issues of concern to their particular trade. On many occasions those groups and organizations took it upon themselves not only to provide us with their perspective on our working document but also to involve both myself and Mr Skarica, and the minister for that matter, in situations where we would gain a better understanding of the issues they're facing in their workplace each and every day.

So I do at the outset want to congratulate those people because those sessions have been extremely informative and have contributed greatly to my knowledge base and certainly the ministry's knowledge base in terms of the issues that are relevant to skilled tradespeople today.

In addition to the working document that was circulated across the province, the Ministry of Education and Training also undertook and completed a telephone survey of more than 1,200 former apprentices and skilled workers to gain a better sense of the issues that were relevant to them and the issues that they felt needed to be addressed in any new legislation as it applied it to the skilled workforce.

At the conclusion of this discussion process, the consultation process, a summary of the input that was received both in the written format and soliciting through the phone survey was compiled in the form of a summary document for consideration.

The Legislature, members here and outside, those involved in the industry, will know that in January of this year the minister announced the government's intention to proceed with changes to the apprenticeship system in this province. In the weeks that followed both the minister and I have met with chairs of our provincial advisory committees and groups representing various employers and workers, educators and trainers across this province to re-emphasize the objective that the government has with respect to changes to skilled workers and the training process that they are experiencing. It's in that context that

we received advice from various groups and organizations. It's in that context that Bill 55 was fashioned and written and introduced to the Legislature in June of this year.

There is still concern with respect to certain aspects of the bill, but I must add that there are groups and organizations out there that have provided their advice and find themselves in agreement with the legislation, such as manufacturers, service trades and the automotive trades. I feel strongly that there's a genuine sense of support of where we want to go with training in this province.

I just want, for the purposes of this evening, to give a sense of the type of dialogue that's taken place, to provide you with some information in terms of those participants, their points of view. One such perspective is from the president of the Canadian Tooling Manufacturers' Association. He indicates: "We, the CTMA, support the direction of Bill 55. We look forward to our continued involvement, especially in the development of the regulations and supporting policies."

I know my colleague from Chatham has raised this issue with the minister and I congratulate him for his continued interest in training opportunities in his community. He has emphasized the continuing need to pursue skilled trades and a workers' pool with respect to the hospitality industry, for example, which is a growing sector that we need to remain mindful of. We have to have the workers to fill the necessary pool for those particular trade areas. My colleague from Chatham has emphasized this issue on a regular basis, and more recently in a letter to the minister, emphasizing the need to move ahead with respect to apprenticeship reform and training. More importantly, he's emphasized the need to coordinate how training opportunities are delivered in this province. It's in that context that we want to continue to move so that not only my colleague but other members on all sides of the House have the opportunity to ensure that the skilled workforce that is necessary to the vitality of this province is being maintained in their community.

The chair and president of the Ontario hostelry foundation indicates: "Bill 55 not only supports Ontario's apprenticeship system but it moves beyond that and is the underpinning of the building blocks of job creation in this province. It ensures a well-trained, highly skilled and competent workforce. The hospitality sector is the second-largest employer in the province and this is important."

As you can see, typically we always think, and I must admit on a personal level I always associated skilled workers in the context of our construction trades. I don't mean by any means to travel down a dangerous road and demean those who are working in other areas; I'm just providing a personal perspective. But it's a consultation process that really has captured the broad range of people who are involved in this very important sector, as we've seen not only from the tooling and manufacturing perspective but certainly from the hospitality perspective as well.

An automotive service technician who is a member of our provincial advisory committee indicates: "The reform of the apprenticeship system is long overdue. This legis-

lation will provide new opportunities for apprentices. The system as it now stands is outmoded and, with its outmoded regulations and requirements, has ceased to meet the needs of employers and apprentices. This legislation brings the system into the 1990s. Bill 55 will allow industry to adapt to changes such as new technologies and improve the quality of skilled trades."

There again is another endorsement of the direction the government of Ontario is moving with respect to skilled workers and the needs they find and the organizations that represent them find themselves in with respect to the future of their particular trade.

Very clearly the message we've heard through this consultation process is that Ontario is in desperate need of a process whereby we continue to attract and rebuild our skilled trades. We're in a desperate situation to ensure that we have an adequate pool of skilled people in this province so that those jobs are not being lost to employees from other parts of the country, for that matter, from other parts of North America or, in some circumstances, from other parts of the world. We're seeing a global perspective being brought to this entire issue and it's one that needs to be addressed in a timely way. That's why this legislation is very relevant. It's not only important to the workers who are in our workplaces today but certainly important to the opportunities that other young people may wish to pursue into the future.

Earlier this week the Ontario Federation of Labour raised concerns with respect to the apprenticeship reform initiative proposed by this government, so I want to take some time this evening to revisit some of the comments they made in their overview and presentation on Bill 55. There has been much debate, as the OFL has expressed, in terms of minimum age and grade entry requirements, suggesting that it will be changed. In fact, the minimum age remains at 16 in the proposed legislation. The minimum of grade 10 is not in the present act and so has not changed as part of the tabled bill that we have before us. A grade 10 reference is in fact a matter that's captured under general regulation under the existing legislation.

Much has been made about minimum age and grade entry requirements, so I want to set aside that issue because it is an issue that has been raised to me and is a question that has been posed in the context of the position the OFL and quite frankly other trade union groups have raised.

1850

The OFL as well says, "The focus on youth will exclude the existing workforce from apprenticeship." Certainly it's my point of view and that of the government that apprenticeship opportunities are available in this province to adults of all ages.

The Ontario government obviously, as I've indicated previously, wants to increase the promotion of apprenticeship opportunities to encourage more young people to participate in apprenticeship training in skilled trades. It's in that context as well that this government, under the Honourable David Johnson, Minister of Education and Training, pursued and expanded our OYAP program, the

Ontario youth apprenticeship program, which is a part of the government's overall approach to increase work experience in co-op education for high school students. That is certainly one of the most rewarding experiences I've seen not only visiting trade-union-sponsored training facilities in this province but also visiting secondary schools across this province to witness first hand the partnerships and relationships they've developed with their particular communities to ensure that the infrastructure — the course requirements within their particular school setting — is relevant to the community and relevant to the individual in terms of the opportunities they may realize upon graduation from secondary school or, if they choose, going on to community college or the university level.

I want to emphasize that all secondary school students, including OYAP participants, must complete provincial requirements, including all compulsory credits to receive their diplomas. There have been no special circumstances established for individuals participating in the OYAP program. Very clearly those standards must be maintained, not only for the safety of the individual but for the safety of the individuals they may be working with and obviously the consumer at large.

It's in that context that the Minister of Education and Training has issued new guidelines with respect to the OYAP program and, as well, supported those new guidelines at policy decision with the necessary tools in the form of some \$1.4 million of new funding for school boards in the province. Effectively, the application of that \$1.4 million will enable school boards across this province to double the number of young people who are involved in the OYAP program, from approximately some 1,000 to 2,000 individuals.

So there are some very significant investments. Not only are we looking at the issue of apprenticeship reform from a global perspective, from a provincial perspective and what it means in the context of national standards, but we as well are pursuing all opportunities to make relevant and meaningful investments at the secondary school level to ensure that young people are able to pursue their dream and become more aware of the opportunities that exist to pursue a skilled trade in this province.

The OFL has indicated that Bill 55 will damage standards. As I indicated in my introductory comments, the government of Ontario has no interest on behalf of its people in lowering the standard that exists with respect to skilled trades. I can assure the members in this House that standards are and will remain high. They'll be driven by employers and employees alike and by representatives of their industry, with the objective of leading to provincially and nationally recognized certification.

The issue of standards is again one that we hear commonly raised and one that I want to assure my colleagues in this House we are giving very serious consideration to in terms of maintenance and enhancing the circumstances that skilled workers find themselves in today.

The OFL had indicated Bill 55 will weaken compulsory certification. In response to that suggestion I want to

indicate that worker, consumer and environmental protections obviously will be maintained and strengthened with the advice of industry with respect to and certainly with the objective of establishing legitimate criteria to determine when a trade should be compulsory.

Very clearly it's my sense in dealing with this issue for nearly a year and a half now that the level of knowledge and the perspectives that need to be heard are best understood by the workers and industry themselves. They are the ones who are engaging in that workplace experience each and every day and it's in that context that we obviously want to see the development of legitimate criteria that are understood by industry and employers in this province for the purpose of developing criteria and certainly as well for the determination of when a trade should be compulsory.

To some extent the OFL has suggested that all apprenticeship trades should be compulsory, which in fact contradicts the reality of the current system within which we have some 48 out of 67 regulated trades now voluntary. There's some inconsistency in that particular area. I understand the context with which they're approaching the issue, but it's one that I believe has not been compromised through the introduction of Bill 55.

As well, the OFL had indicated that the elimination of ratios will weaken the quality of training. Again I want to emphasize here that quality is critically important, not only to the skilled worker but to the apprentices themselves. Obviously appropriate supervision of apprentices by skilled tradespeople is critical to the quality of training and certainly it does not need to be in regulation.

There are a number of areas that have been addressed and certainly another key issue in that particular brief was the issue of apprenticeship pay and tuition. As many members in this Legislature know, apprentices are employed workers who do not pay any tuition for their classroom training presently. It's in that context that we continue to pursue a training agreement with our federal colleagues.

In response to the issue of finances, the Minister of Education and Training and the Minister of Finance have heard some of the preliminary feedback we've received from people working in the automotive sector. Members of this Legislature will recall the introduction by the ministry of the loans for tools program that has been introduced by this government to help new apprentices purchase tools during the first year of their apprenticeship. This announcement equates to a \$5-million investment to assist approximately 11,000 apprentices in this province. I think it's a very significant recognition of the financial challenges that present themselves to a certain sector of the skilled labour force and one that this government has recognized and moved to remedy.

I want to emphasize the importance of this legislation in establishing flexibility on how to achieve goals. We certainly have some specific goals the government remains firm on but we will continue to dialogue with skilled trade sectors to solicit their points of view on these particular issues.

As I indicated in my introductory comments, this government recognizes that workers' skills are an important factor in the competitiveness of a business and, for that matter, they're important in terms of the competitiveness of this province and this country as this province continues to lead the nation in job creation opportunities. Ontario's skilled workers will continue to be trained to be leaders in quality, as I indicated at the outset. Whether they're private trainers or trainers through our trade union groups in this province, there's a high level of commitment and dedication to quality and safety, one that cannot be compromised and one that I'm confident this legislation does not compromise.

As well, we want to be assured that any changes we make with respect to apprenticeship training in this province are flexible in the context of our ability collectively to meet the challenges of the 21st century. From that perspective we've seen not only this particular piece of legislation but, as I mentioned, the OYAP program and other related programs that this government has pursued in an effort to ensure that training opportunities are being realized by young people across this province. We've done it at the secondary level through the OYAP program, we've done it at the post-secondary level, and certainly we've seen through the development and the creation of the access to opportunities program, a \$150-million program, an investment fund designed to double the number of students enrolled in computer science and engineering, for example. So the approach to training has been very comprehensive at all levels of government and we'll continue to see that development occur.

Members may remember that we announced in the 1998 budget a strategic skills investment program totalling some \$30 million. Twenty million dollars of that announcement is dedicated to skill partnerships through the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. It's those partnerships not only within government but outside government that I believe will lead to a more flexible, more modernized training and apprenticeship system for this province.

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To conclude, because I know my colleagues are anxious to say a few words this evening, I'm confident and want to re-emphasize that this legislation in no way compromises the red seal program that exists. The importance of standards, quality and safety to employers, importantly to employees, but equally so to consumers in this province must be maintained. I'm confident that through continued efforts on behalf of those organizations, whether they're private trainers, educators, trade union representatives or other organizations, that dialogue will continue to allow us to develop a new and modernized apprenticeship and training system for this province that will be meeting the needs of our workers and employers well into the future.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): I join my colleagues to support the second reading of Bill 55.

Apprenticeship training has been part of the province's success since the pioneer days of Upper Canada. Apprentices played an important role in building the foundation of Ontario industry way back in the 1800s.

Today's apprentices continue to play an important role in our economy. Apprentices helped build the CN Tower. They built the space arm that proudly displays Canada's flag on the NASA space shuttles. Apprentices played an important role in the success of Ontario's booming auto parts and assembly industries. They play a leading role in the support of tourism in our province by supporting a high standard of excellence in the foodservice industry.

The hospitality sector is the second largest employer in Ontario. Hospitality and tourism are very important activities in my riding. With the Trent Canal system nearby, the Bay of Quinte on our doorstep, the lakes in Hastings county and the beaches of Prince Edward county within easy reach, there are a lot of people who work in the food industry in my riding.

The chair and president of the Ontario hostelry foundation has written the Minister of Education and Training to support Bill 55. The letter says Bill 55 would not only strengthen apprentice training, but underpin the building blocks of job creation in the province of Ontario. As well you know, the younger people we need to put into work are most of the people who go into apprenticing.

Availability of skilled workers is an important factor to encourage investments that will lead to new jobs and business opportunities. The government recognizes these facts, and these facts are one of the leading factors driving the government's reform of the apprenticeship system. These facts are also leading factors behind the introduction of Bill 55.

I can tell you that I've had an apprentice in our business. I've been in the service station business and mechanics for some 32 years. We went through the training of an apprentice. In some cases it was very successful. In other cases it was not successful because of some of the rules and regulations that we've had to try to live with.

I think that with the changing times, we've had to bring up our apprenticeship program to a place where we can put a little bit more effort in. I know Bill 55 will strengthen apprenticeship training. It will provide the legislative framework to reform the apprenticeship training that needs to be put in place for us to educate and train some very young people to give them a lifelong standard of living.

The reforms should ensure that these standards are in place for all apprentice work in all workplaces. We're working with the industry to develop training programs and certification requirements that are rigorous and reflect real workplace realities.

For the first time, apprentices would have clear, identifiable goals to meet for on-the-job training. Bill 55 would put the focus on skills learned rather than the time spent in the workplace. If passed, the legislation would ensure that there are clear, measurable outcomes for apprentices and employers. If passed by the Legislature, Bill 55 would establish quality measures for on-the-job

trainers. It would ensure that there are quality measures in place to meet standards set by the industry.

If passed by the Legislature, Bill 55 will encourage more employers to train. Bill 55 would put more responsibilities for training directly in the hands of the workers, unions and employers. The quality of training would be in the hands of the people directly involved in the skilled occupation. This is how it should be. The old-fashioned concept of apprenticeship is simple and straightforward. It is based on the sound idea that the best way to learn a skill is to work alongside someone who has mastered that skill for a good long time.

If passed by the Legislature, Bill 55 would ensure that apprenticeship training is based in the workplace, where it belongs. In addition, if passed by the Legislature, Bill 55 would strengthen a growing appreciation of the importance of apprenticeship training and skills occupation.

In January, Ernst and Young published a report on Ontarians' attitudes towards skilled trades. The report was based on a survey of adults in Ontario. One of the questions asked in this survey was: "Imagine that a young person is considering his or her career options and asks your honest opinion about the idea of an industrial apprenticeship program or studying at a community college to become an industrial technologist. Would you support that young person's decision?" Fully two thirds of the people surveyed said they would support the young person's decision. Job availability and security are the main reasons Ontarians support careers in skilled trades.

Last week, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business issued a report that pointed out the importance of apprenticeship in helping young people to find careers. Since the report was issued, the federation has written the Minister of Education and Training to support Bill 55. The federation is pleased that the government intends to expand apprenticeship training in new trades and new areas of economic growth. The federation is pleased that the government intends to create a transparent framework that is flexible and responsive to the training needs of the industry. The federation is also pleased that Bill 55 would help young people recognize vocational education as a realistic career opportunity.

This year in Hastings and Prince Edward counties and the neighbouring townships of Lennox, Addington and Haliburton, there were 774 apprentices active in the workplace. About 23% are under the age of 25. They are the future of our local economy.

I support Bill 55 because I know it would benefit these apprentices. I know it would strengthen apprenticeship training because it would give a greater responsibility to employers, workers and unions. Bill 55 would ensure that this form of training remains strong. It would ensure that the standards are high, that quality and safety are high, and that the system has the flexibility to meet the demands of new technologies, new occupations and new industries.

On this weekend past, I had the pleasure of talking to some people who are in the trade of marble refinishing. It's a very new industry as far as Canada is concerned. There are only two firms in Ontario at the present time

that do marble refinishing. One of them has worked out here in the halls at Queen's Park for a good part of the last year, and there's still a lot more work to do. They have a problem with trying to get young people to work in that trade. It's a trade that has been imported from other countries as far as Canada is concerned. These people are crying for people to come to work and train in that field of marble refinishing. These are the same people who did a lot of work at the Niagara casino and also at the Windsor casino. There is a lot of work required in that industry to make sure that they are capable, trained people who can refinish, clean up the spills and things that happen on marble. Those people certainly would be very interested in developing an apprenticeship program along with their experts so that they could support themselves as life goes on.

I fully support the bill and I hope the members of the Legislature will support it as well. This concludes my remarks. I'll turn it over to my colleague.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I draw your attention to rule 23 of the standing orders, page 20, where it says,

"In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she:...

"(d) In the opinion of the Speaker, refers at length to debates of the current session, or reads unnecessarily from verbatim reports of the Legislative debates or any other document."

I submit that the member who just delivered his remarks read at great length from a document. It seems to me that the rules of the debate are clear: A member can refer to notes but a member should not speak from notes simply by reading those notes.

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The Acting Speaker: I had a hint that this member may be standing on this point of order before he stood up. You did signal.

I had a quick chat with the table officers about this, and you're quite correct when you read section (d). However, you may notice that in the course of debate day to day in this House, people often read from documents, from speeches.

Mr Wildman: I don't.

The Acting Speaker: Well, perhaps the member for Algoma doesn't.

Mr Wildman: John George Diefenbaker used to say this was a terrible waste of time, to have somebody read their notes. Just table the document.

The Acting Speaker: Order, member for Algoma.

Mr Wildman: The member can just table the document. He doesn't have to read it into the record.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I believe the member for Quinte would perhaps say that it was necessary for him to read from his document tonight, so I'm going to rule that the member was not out of order.

Further debate?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I'm very pleased to join the debate with respect to Bill 55. Bill 55 — I'm just going to refer to the bill here — is An Act to

revise the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act. This is a long-overdue change. There hasn't been a change in this area for over 30 years. As I said, the update with respect to apprenticeship training as we are entering the year 2000, and through the 1990s, is long overdue.

Bill 55 is designed to encourage more industry, labour and business involvement in setting apprenticeship policy. It's a very, very important area in my riding of Simcoe Centre. I've met with the Barrie Construction Association on a number of occasions to deal with this particular issue and I know they're very happy that the government moved forward in a very thoughtful and expeditious manner in terms of coming forth with this particular piece of legislation, so it's very welcome.

In dealing with apprenticeship training, a lot of the public would probably be wondering what we are doing here, what an apprenticeship is. I just want to refer to the definition of what an apprenticeship is in the act. "Apprentice" means an individual who has entered into a registered training agreement under which the individual is to receive workplace-based training in an occupation or skill set as part of an apprenticeship program approved by the director." The director we're referring to is the director of apprenticeship. That individual hasn't been changed from the previous piece of legislation.

The purposes of the bill are set out in the act. I think the purposes are very instructive when you're dealing with something as fundamental as this bill in terms of trades qualification and apprenticeship. "The purposes of this act are to support and regulate the acquisition of occupational skills through workplace-based apprenticeship programs that lead to formal certification, and thereby to expand opportunities for Ontario workers and increase the competitiveness of Ontario businesses." I think that's a very fundamental goal in terms of expanding opportunities for Ontario workers in terms of their skill sets and the competitiveness of Ontario business.

I was very pleased last week to join Minister Wilson and Minister Palladini in Georgian College in my riding at the unveiling of the support of the government for the automotive institute to the tune of \$4.8 million going towards the technical program with respect to tool and die making and automotive design. It's going to create increased enrolment for students and also tremendous employment opportunities in the automotive sector. As you know, one in six jobs in this province is in the automotive sector.

Certainly in my riding of Simcoe Centre, I would say they'll expand that to the county of Simcoe, where my riding is. We have the recent expansion of the Honda plant and I believe there's going to be an addition of 1,200 new jobs. Around that Honda plant there are more than 21 automotive-related parts manufacturers serving such automotive companies as Ford Motor Co, Chrysler and General Motors, as well as the Honda plant. So this is very good news for my riding in terms of the job opportunities and also the competitiveness it brings not only to the area, because quality workers are certainly needed, but this training for the young students who go to

Georgian College is going to be highly sought after and their employment opportunities will be there.

That's one of the aspects the government has taken with respect to ensuring there are really good employment opportunities in the automotive sector within Ontario, and particularly in Simcoe Centre. So I'm very pleased that that happened.

With respect to the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, 1998, the goal obviously is to design a more effective apprenticeship training system in line with the 1990s. Some aspects of the bill in terms of the differences between the existing legislation and the proposed legislation are that, as I said, the purpose clause makes training a priority. The bill supports the regulation and recognition of skills learned through apprenticeship training. It also updates the legislation to match the needs of the workplace of the 1990s. That's got to be the fundamental goal, because this particular piece of legislation hasn't been updated for 30 years. That's a long time. There's a big difference between 1968 Ontario and 1998 Ontario in terms of the global economy and the type of workers we're able to offer not only to Ontario but to the companies that compete globally.

A good feature of the bill is that it's going to allow part-time and contract workers to become apprentices. I think that's very good news because quite frankly we have to create more opportunities. We can't have barriers. When I was first elected, we were talking about removing barriers to the skilled trades. That was one aspect in terms of removing a fundamental barrier to being able to become an apprentice. I think that's long overdue.

Also, the intent of the bill is to keep pace with change. The bill would set out that certain skills or skill sets may be designated as restricted based on clear criteria. The proposed bill would require anyone in an occupation with restricted skills to be either a registered apprentice or a worker certified to perform the skill. I think that's very fundamental because when you look at the bill there is a definition of what an occupation is: "occupation" includes a trade." I think that's a very fundamental aspect of the bill, applying to trades and other occupations. It expands the breadth of the opportunity and removes the barriers as you look at the purpose of this bill.

It expands apprenticeship training to new trades. Where there are common skills within more than one skilled occupation, those skills may be performed by people certified to work in any of those occupations. That's a fundamental change and it's obviously something that should be done.

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Also, industry and not the government will set the wages. Previously, wages and ratios were established in regulations for each trade. The new bill would not regulate wages for apprentices or establish the ratio between the number of certified workers and apprentices in the workplace. That's a fundamental change, which was asked for of me by the Barrie Construction Association. I think that will create greater opportunities, especially in — some of the employers I was dealing with, Abercrombie

Electric and Wallwin Electric, were talking about the opportunities they could create if we removed those ratios and allowed them to have more flexibility in their own operations. Quite frankly, they're the employers who are going to employ these people and they're also going to provide them with these invaluable skills through this apprenticeship training. It makes sense to make sure the opportunities are there. Also, they're going to be able to use these workers and not have them restricted by what I would call another barrier, this ratio.

The industry, not government, will set the age and education standards. That's another barrier. That's what we've been talking about: removing barriers for workers who want to become an apprentice and get a very good trade and earn a good living. That's what it's all about. The previous act determined that the minimum age of an apprentice was 16, and the minimum education requirement of grade 10 was set out in a general regulation. The proposed bill would set 16 years as the minimum age to sign a training agreement. That's very fundamental. What the industry wanted was minimum entry requirements for approved apprenticeship training programs. "Minimum entry requirements" obviously means they wanted to remove the barriers to someone coming in and getting a trade.

The industry would set minimum education levels for apprentices. After all, they're the ones who are going to be putting their reputations on the line. They've got to get the work done; they've got to put in quality work and they have to have a quality workforce. They wanted greater say in being able to make sure they have apprentices in their workplace to compete and make sure these workers are adequately deployed.

We have met, after long consultation with all the stakeholders in industry and in the working environment of this province, to make sure we're removing the barriers to employment in the apprenticeship area. That is the major objective. We should not be putting in artificial barriers with respect to apprenticeship reform. We have to remove them.

What I want to speak on at this point is the reason for change in the apprenticeship system, why that was necessary. The previous act, which was the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act, had not been significantly revised since 1964. After 35 years, the act does not reflect the current labour market. I think we can accept that as a fact: Things have changed between 1964 and 1998.

The Apprenticeship and Certification Act will enable Ontario to develop and maintain an effective, flexible apprenticeship and certification system that will provide workers and employers with excellent training programs in existing and emerging skilled occupations. That's the key phrase, "emerging skilled occupations." It also streamlined the administration by clarifying roles and allowing occupation-specific requirements to be determined outside the new act through regulation.

For example, instead of specifying ratios, the proposed act will leave it up to each industry to determine what is

best. That industry-created ratio can then be written into a specific trade regulation. That's very fundamental with respect to self-regulation, that you're dealing with removing barriers that were getting in the way of employers like Abercrombie Electric and Wallwin Electric, that wanted to employ more apprentices but couldn't because of the legislation. That doesn't make any sense. If they were able to employ these apprentices and deploy them in an effective fashion, they would get their trade, so why would we have legislation in place to stop them from doing that? It just doesn't make sense.

The current act contains barriers to the participation of youth. With 14.5% unemployment, we need more young people to consider skilled trades. We have to get them in that area. They're good-paying jobs and they're long-lasting jobs in terms of the skills you can apply throughout your working career.

The current act takes a cookie-cutter approach to training in all sectors. Programs must look the same whether you are training to be a baker or a bricklayer. We need to abandon the one-size-fits-all approach.

The federal government is withdrawing its support for apprenticeship training, and we need a sustainable funding model where everyone who benefits from the system invests in making it work. It's key to note that the federal government is withdrawing its support for apprenticeship training. What else are they withdrawing from? We could speak for the next 24 hours on what they're withdrawing from and why they shouldn't be doing that, but this is another area where the federal government is withdrawing its involvement.

Employers are facing critical skill shortages in manufacturing and automotive sectors. As I've said, we were at Georgian College last week. The government supported the Canadian Automotive Institute to the tune of \$4.8 million, significantly increasing the enrolment of students in tool-and-die making and in automotive design. That's going to result in jobs for these graduates. They're going to be well-paying jobs in the automotive sector.

The proposed new act will also provide a framework for a flexible apprenticeship system to provide industries with the skilled workers they need to guarantee excellence and safety to workers, employers and consumers. It was fundamental that we had to change the apprenticeship system. Two areas we have to focus on are the removal of the barriers under the old ratio system to employers being able to employ apprentices and make themselves even more competitive. If they weren't able to hire apprentices, that would restrict their ability to grow as a business. It is also opportunity lost for people who want to get into the apprenticeship program.

Even more fundamental is removing the barriers to the participation of youth. As I stated earlier, when you're dealing with the age requirement being put at a minimum of 16 but allowing the industry to determine the educational requirements, that's very fundamental. We have to encourage young workers to get into the skilled trades profession, obviously because there's a skill shortage, which makes us less competitive, but also because there

are job opportunities there. It provides them with a great opportunity not only to get a very viable job but also a well-paying job in terms of their career.

Those are very noble objectives. We have to make sure the bill is flexible enough, and I think we've done that through the regulation-setting approach in this bill, which gives greater flexibility to deal with these new emerging trades. The bill brings us up to speed for making Ontario very competitive in the year 2000, and that's what our focus should be, in terms of training our youth and making our businesses more competitive and also enabling them to hire more workers. We shouldn't be having barriers put in place that restrict them from hiring more workers.

When you remove the barriers, as we have through this bill, you are creating job opportunities, and that's what this government is all about. This province is the economic engine of this country. The way the other parts of the country have been performing, with the exception of Alberta, you have to say that the programs and the business environment this government has put in place in Ontario definitely make this province far more competitive than it ever has been and have created significant job opportunities and significant job creation, in excess of 350,000 new jobs since this government was put into power.

I wholeheartedly support this piece of legislation.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): There were so many speakers that I'm just going to respond generally, but I want to point out a number of repetitive terms that have been used. "Ontario's apprenticeship system has not changed since 1964. It's a rigid system that's not responsive to the current needs of business" etc.

This is a document that was drafted and shared with the public over a year ago. It talks about how the government members can say different things to different populations: what they should say to the media, what they should say to the apprentices and what they should say to employers. For example, to employers they should say, "The new system will be industry-focused" — but I didn't hear that mentioned by too many members here tonight — "and will better direct training dollars to meet industry needs." Also, "The proposed tax credit will help offset the risk employers make in hiring young apprentices."

They wouldn't say that to the media, because the slant to be directed to the media on how good this is going to be for employers is a slightly different one. And they wouldn't say that to apprentices, because right in there it says, and it's almost like an admission, that there is a risk. A risk of what? It's a risk of health and safety and bringing young people in, without some qualifications, who may not even have the literacy levels to deal with the requirements of the manuals that have to be dealt with.

We have to be very careful. Let's face it, this document was based on rationalizing the government cutting another \$10 million from the apprenticeship budget when already they had reduced 39% of the apprenticeship and training budget in the previous three years. They say they're

committed to a real, sound quality program for Ontario. I don't believe it.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): It was interesting to hear the member for Middlesex lead off in the debate this evening on Bill 55. I wondered why it was the member for Middlesex leading off. If this was something that was so important to the Minister of Education and Training, you would think he might be here to lead off this debate this evening, but he may be out putting out some fires as a result of what's happening with Bill 160 and all the schools that are being closed as a result.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: It's quite important. The member is referring to the absence of another member of the House, which is of course against standing orders. It would have been nice if he had been here to hear the speech of the member for Middlesex.

The Acting Speaker: The member has a point. Members know that they shouldn't comment on the absence of other members.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: He's quite right that it's improper to comment on the absence of the Minister of Education and Training.

The Acting Speaker: That is out of order. Go ahead, member for Windsor-Riverside.

Mr Lessard: I just want to thank the member for Nepean for emphasizing my point.

The member for Middlesex is talking about encouraging more people to get into the apprenticeship program. I think that's an endeavour that all of us are interested in seeing. We know it's been a long time since the apprenticeship act has been brought up to date, but it's an act that by and large has been working quite fine.

If the minister was actually doing consultations in anticipation of making changes to the apprenticeship act, it wouldn't be so bad. But I know that people from the OFL — we have Sandra Clifford and James Moffat from the sheet metal workers here today — are not happy with the consultation they've been involved in. There have been a whole lot of meetings but not a whole lot of listening to what they've had to say. They're quite concerned about these changes and they want to have an opportunity to have some public consultations. We hope the minister listens to that suggestion.

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): It's certainly a pleasure to comment on the speeches we heard from the member for Middlesex and the member for Quinte and the member for Simcoe Centre. All three spoke with obvious deep knowledge of the bill.

Unlike the other members who have commented on the speeches, I listened to all three speeches. I noticed that the member for Middlesex had a deep knowledge of not only the detail in the bill but also the background that went into the drafting of the bill, the sources of much of the advice that went into the bill and also the consultation that's gone on between the Ministry of Education and Training and the various parties that have been consulted on the bill.

The member for Quinte took a different approach to the bill and provided the kind of background that a person

with his business experience can provide. He commented on the practical nature of the new approach, the need for a new approach to training and a new approach to apprenticeship. The member for Quinte certainly provides in this House a real, practical, down-to-earth business approach; that's a very valuable one that we can use in debate, and sometimes it's missing from other members' backgrounds.

The member for Simcoe Centre brought to the debate a knowledge of the current legislation, which of course he deals with on a daily basis in his law practice. He was also able to analyze the bill, which I know he has read in depth, and to offer some of his own opinions, especially on the aspect of the barriers that currently face not only employees but employers. He has spoken to me about the number of people in his riding who have been interested in this legislation.

I thought all three members directed their attention very well to the bill and dealt with the substance of the bill.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I'm glad to have an opportunity to comment very briefly as well on the legislation and the remarks made by the members. We're all looking forward to hearing our colleague David Caplan, the member for Oriole, speak right after this to give us some of the concerns, because there are a number of concerns related to this bill.

When one looks at the whole issue of apprenticeships, one is thinking in terms of increasing accessibility, and one of the real problems with this bill is that some real barriers to accessibility are clearly there. The member for Oriole will probably speak about them in greater detail.

One has to be concerned when one sees the imposition of tuition fees. That will be a complete change to the system that may make it very difficult for many people to access it. The government has not been clear about what the level of fees will be or how the student assistance, if anything, will be handled. Their record on post-secondary tuition in the last couple of years should make anybody blanch with great concern. That is a concern we have. Does that increase accessibility? It may indeed decrease it.

The deregulation of the mandated wage rate is a great concern. The age of the average apprentice is somewhere around 26. With the mandated wage rates, many apprentices will not be able to continue in the system — that's one of the fears we have — because they will not be able to afford to work for what might amount to a minimum wage. That's a concern we have.

The member for Ottawa Centre made reference to the fact that the elimination of minimum education standards is a going to be part of this. That is a great concern as well. Surely we should be encouraging students to continue their education rather than setting up a situation where they may not be able to meet the standards they have to do this.

These are all great concerns. I hope the government shows some flexibility. I know my colleague is going to suggest some changes that should be made to this, so I hope there will be flexibility shown by the government, something we rarely see in this Legislature but something

we very desperately need to see in terms of this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Simcoe Centre, you can sum up.

Mr Tascona: I want to respond to the comments made by the respective members. The member for Ottawa Centre doesn't have his facts straight with respect to this province's commitment to apprenticeship. If he had his facts straight, he'd know that the federal government's share averaged about \$40 million per year when in 1996 it announced that it would withdraw from directly funding apprenticeship schooling by June 30, 1999, which means they're giving us nothing. He says we're not committed to apprenticeship programs. We came forth with the bill after a year of consultation — a lot of consultation — with the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association, the Canadian Auto Workers union, the Council of Ontario Construction Associations, the Labourers' International Union of North America, Interior Finishing Systems Training Centre, the millwright regional council of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Labour, and it goes on and on.

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There was a lot of consultation. The bottom line is that when the Liberals were in power they did nothing from 1985 to 1990. They didn't have any commitment to apprenticeship change.

With respect to the MPP for Windsor-Riverside, in one breath he says: "We see that the bill encourages more people to get into apprenticeship" — he likes that — "but the fact is the unions aren't happy so I don't like it either. You've got to make them happy, otherwise the unions are not going to be committed to this."

The bottom line is there was a lot of opportunity. I indicated the number of consultations that were done with a number of unions. They will have an opportunity if they want to speak on the bill. There will be public hearings and the unions can have their say in the normal process. The bottom line is, when you're dealing with that type of approach, the unions have been a part of this process and, as far as I'm concerned, they'll continue to be a part of the process.

The bill shows flexibility and I think it's one of the best bills in apprenticeship there has been in a long time.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): At the outset I'd just like to say that myself and the Liberal caucus will be opposing this legislation. I'll be outlining a lot of those reasons, but before I do so I'd like to recognize that in the audience this evening we have James Moffat from the sheet metal workers; Sandra Clifford, the education director of the Ontario Federation of Labour; I saw John Cartwright earlier, the business manager of the Toronto building trades council; Jack Cooney, the training coordinator of Local 46 of the plumbers and steam fitters; I think I saw Joe Fashion, the business manager of Local 43 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

I must say I find it shocking and appalling that the minister would not want to comment on this very

significant piece of legislation. I really am close to speechless, but not quite because —

Interjections.

Mr Caplan: I know my friends on the other side were hoping so, but it really is an affront that —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Member for Nepean, come to order.

Mr Caplan: It is an affront that the minister would not want to address the Legislature and the people of Ontario and all interested stakeholders on this important piece of legislation, Bill 55. Bill 55 is a very small piece of legislation, only nine pages, so the minister could, but he has chosen not to.

I'm going to talk about the so-called consultation process. I would like to say at the outset I heard the parliamentary assistant doing mea culpas about the kind of consultation that has taken place. It's been absolutely shameful and I'll get into that.

I'm going to comment on specific aspects of the bill itself and finally I'm going to talk about a number of stakeholder groups, literally from all sectors, who have some very serious concerns and who are intimately involved in the apprenticeship system — a system, I would add, that works quite well. It is a system to which many will agree reforms could be welcome, but it does work. It is fundamentally sound. We have participants from the trades and the apprentices themselves and I will be touching on some of their comments.

I'd like to review the consultation process, as I said earlier. In December 1996, the government released a discussion paper and said it wanted to consult all of the stakeholder groups in the apprenticeship system, a very laudable goal. Not surprisingly, however, and I will outline, the government has dropped the ball. It is a hallmark of Mike Harris and his government that they just don't listen. While they say they wish to consult, really it is just the first three letters: It's a con. It's a con job that's going on here.

After that consultation was complete, the participants were informed that they would be given a report regarding the results of the consultation in the near future. That would be coming, and in the meantime — this is really fascinating — a document called *New Directions*. On the front it's entitled *New Directions for Ontario's Apprenticeship System*, "confidential." This is a confidential ministry document that was leaked to the media.

Mr Baird: It is not that confidential, obviously.

Mr Caplan: No, in fact it's not. The government leaked this to the media and it had several startling revelations in it. In fact, while this consultation process was going on, nine assistant deputy ministers had signed off on this. It shows the kind of sham that there was in the consultation process the minister said he was going to follow. So this document was leaked.

I'll give you a few little snippets from the document just to give you a flavour of what it was about. It says that "MET" — the Ministry of Education and Training — "fiscal savings target for 1998-89 identifies a further \$10-

million reduction as a result of apprenticeship reform." Really right there we see what the intent, what the key of this whole process is. We want to extract more dollars from education and training and yet we've seen \$1 billion cut out of elementary and secondary. We've seen out of post-secondary education monies just extracted. It's not inconsistent with what this government has done, wanting to take further dollars out of an education and training system.

The document goes on. It talks about funding. This is very interesting. It says, "The introduction of tuition and administrative fees are intended to form the basis for a new sustainable approach to system funding in which individual apprentices take on greater responsibility...." Then it goes on to say that "Course fees/tuition and administrative fees will not, however, fully address the fiscal pressures in apprenticeship without risking a severe impact on client and industry participation."

Even in the government's own documentation they note that they are placing an inordinate strain upon the apprenticeship system in Ontario. I'll go on. It's amazing what's in this document.

They're going to eliminate provisions which regulate employment conditions — for example, wages. They want to lower wages.

They talk about enhancing "industry involvement, through expanded advisory committee mandate, accountability provisions." By the way, I think that's a very laudable goal. They want to remove the minimum entry requirement of grade 10. Very interesting. Lower the academic requirements to get into apprenticeship. It's interesting to note that that's exactly the things that have happened in Bill 55. Bill 55 has eliminated the wage provisions, has eliminated the educational requirement.

I'll continue. It has a very interesting analysis. They talk about expected impacts: "It is expected that the government will win support for...." and it goes on to list about three things. Then it says the "government may face criticism from...." and it goes on to list about 20 things, which is kind of interesting. It talks about all kinds of things, from apprentices to trades to wages to tuition, and all the areas where the government's proposals, because they wish to extract dollars, are going to come in for criticism.

In fact, and I think my colleague earlier pointed this out, there is even an issue management strategy for how they will deal with the media. We've heard the comments from three government members earlier this evening in relation to this legislation and it goes something like this: "Our message is going to be, 'Ontario's apprenticeship system has not changed since 1964 and this has resulted in a rigid system that is not responsive to the current needs of business.'"

It goes on and talks about a number of different things. It says to the unions, "Why is the government eliminating regulations on the ratio of apprentices to journeypersons?" It says, "The government recognizes ratios are important," and yet they have eliminated it in Bill 55.

"We're looking at the provincial advisory councils to advise us." I'll get into that in a bit, but in the consultation process the provincial advisory councils have advised you not to do that. Why isn't this government listening? I guess it's not a surprise, because they never listen.

I'll go on: there are a couple of other very interesting areas in here that talk about downloading of costs. There are other interesting areas that talk about putting apprenticeship in a youth employment program. There are other interesting areas which talk about "shift programs details, including the specific parameters...from the act to the regulations." I'm going to get into that as well.

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In fact, the document outlines changes which have been widely criticized from just about every stakeholder group. Amazingly enough, there was a consultation process in secret, there's this other process going on, and I think we all know the reason behind that.

The kinds of things that they criticized were, as I've mentioned, the educational requirements, the full removal of trade certification, tuition fees, the elimination of the two-year minimum education. So what was the government's next step?

They said they would wish to continue consulting before the legislation was introduced. In fact, the ministry issued a memo which says, "Please use the following to handle inquiries from clients regarding today's article concerning the leaked copy of the cabinet draft." It says: "Note: If stakeholders want to discuss the specifics outlined in the draft submission, please take note of their comments and forward them to the apprenticeship reform project. Specific commitments to follow up with stakeholders should be avoided."

Interesting, isn't it? There's consultation: We're going to avoid listening at all.

I have to give a lot of credit to the stakeholder groups, because in good faith they gave their input again. They said: "No, we don't think tuition should be a part of the apprenticeship reforms. Don't remove the minimum educational requirements. In fact, we think you should raise them up." They said, "Don't eliminate the two-year minimum educational requirement."

Then the government made an announcement up in Newmarket. The minister travelled to a tool and die manufacturer on January 19 of this year. What was in the announcement? Tuition fees, deregulation of wages, the elimination of the minimum educational requirement, everything that the stakeholder groups said they didn't want you to do. The employers, the skilled journeypeople, the apprentices all said, "Don't do this," and what did this minister do? The exact opposite.

What did Mr Johnson say? He said: "Don't worry. Tell me your concerns. The legislation isn't drafted yet. Changes can still be made."

Fair enough. So in good faith the stakeholder groups gave input again, for a third time. They said: "No tuitions. Don't remove the minimum educational requirements. In fact, raise them. Don't eliminate the two-year minimum requirement."

Then on the very last day of the House this spring — and that, I think, shows the kind of contempt and the sneaky way this government does business — the government tabled this piece of legislation, Bill 55. What did it contain? Once again, tuition fees. Once again, the deregulation of wages. Once again, the elimination of minimal educational requirements. Everything the stakeholders said, everything the employers said, everything the skilled journeypeople said and everything the apprentices said not to do. So much for Dave Johnson listening; so much for Mike Harris listening. I think it really goes to show.

In fact, just after the minister tabled the legislation, he sent out a fax to the Construction Trade Provincial Advisory Committee representatives and he said: "The full details of the new apprenticeship programs still need to be worked out. Work will continue over the summer and fall with all apprenticeship stakeholders to obtain input into the new regulatory framework for apprenticeship. Your issues will continue to be addressed through this process."

Guess what? No meetings. Didn't even meet. He sends a fax saying, "We're going to talk to you because a lot of work still needs to be done," and they still haven't met. Isn't that amazing? No, not really. We're talking about a government and a minister that just don't listen. The stakeholders and this caucus, many people, are asking for public hearings. I think I was shocked to hear my good friend from Simcoe say that there will be public hearings on the bill.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Oh, you don't want them?

Mr Caplan: I'm very glad. We definitely want them, my good friend, Minister of Agriculture and Food. I am absolutely delighted that we now have a commitment from the government that there will be public hearings into this legislation. I'm not holding my breath. Today, Dave Johnson, the Minister of Education and Training, refused to commit to them. I'm not surprised, because he hasn't listened before. Let's take a look.

Bill 31, a piece of labour legislation, was brought into this House, rammed through this House: no consultation, no amendments entertained, no discussion at all. It shows the way this government does business. They don't listen. They don't care.

Let's look at Dave Johnson's record on post-secondary education. It was interesting that last year students took to the streets of Toronto — actually, they took to the streets around the province, but here in Toronto they were all over Bay Street because tuition fees were too high, because they're carrying unacceptable debt levels, because they can't access assistance through the Ontario student assistance program.

So what happened? About two or three weeks later, we have the Minister of Finance stand up and in an economic statement say, "We're going to allow 20% tuition increases and," just as a kicker, "we're going to deregulate for second entry and for graduate programs." Very

interesting. When somebody says don't do something, the government does the exact opposite.

If you look at the universities, by the government's own admission when they took office, we were ninth out of 10 as far as per capita university funding. They abhorred that. They said it was terrible. They were going to do something about it. Everyone said, "That's wonderful." Today we're 10th out of 10. Congratulations. That's quite a record over there.

Elementary and secondary school: You only have to look as far as the infamous Bill 160 to see how much this government actually listens to teachers, to parents, to boards of education, to stakeholders. They don't listen and they don't care.

I and the Liberal caucus will remain vigilant. We do listen. We demand public hearings and we will be demanding to know what the regulations are. This bill is only nine pages, as I said, but all it is is giving the minister centralized control through regulation ability.

Maybe it is time that Dave Johnson and Mike Harris and the government bench started listening. I certainly think it is time they started to listen to the people of Ontario. They certainly will get a chance to listen in probably about eight months or a year, but they should really start now.

What's actually in the bill? What's new? Tuition for training or, as I think opposition leader Mike Harris called it, user fees, education taxes. That's exactly what's in store for the apprentices of Ontario. Right now, because this bill isn't law yet, there are no tuition fees. But upon passage, as the minister said, there is an intent to begin to charge tuition.

We are opposed to bringing in tuitions because they pose yet another barrier entirely. We've seen what the effect has been on the post-secondary system, especially in light of their deregulation of graduate and second-entry programs. This will be a barrier like that, but also, when you couple it with the deregulation of the wage rate, those two factors combined, you will see apprentices having to pay more for their learning, but now they're going to earn less for their labour.

I can't believe the government members were all saying they are in favour of removing barriers. This has got to be the largest roadblock to someone entering the skilled trade field that I can possibly think of. As I've noted, the government's record on tuition is extremely poor: 60%, not including deregulation, is the legacy of Mike Harris and Dave Johnson and this government for the imposition of tuition on post-secondary students.

Of course, we have no sense of what student assistance is going to be, although there are snippets, there are hints in here. They talk about — and I will get into this a bit more — sponsors of training and potentially private trainers and things like that. Are we really going to start to see a voucher system in the apprenticeship area? Is that what's in store for us? I certainly hope not, although I suspect that might be a direction that the government will be going in. It's critical to note that the average age for apprentices is 26 years old. These are people who have

families. They have mortgages. By imposing additional taxes on these people, by lowering their wages, you're not making apprenticeship more attractive, you're making it more prohibitive.

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The Ministry of Education did a user survey. In their user survey it's very interesting to note — and this is their own survey, so this is Ministry of Education and Training information — it says: "Almost half of the respondents indicated that they would not have registered for the program if they had been required to pay half of the tuition fee," and more than half said that when confronted with the full price, they wouldn't have done that either. There are about 11,000 apprentices who enter the system on an annual basis, so 5,500 of them would not have entered if there was tuition. Interesting that the government would begin to frame the language as removing barriers when that's exactly what they're doing with this legislation.

The government and the minister are proposing to eliminate the journeyperson-to-apprentice ratio. The minister argues that having this mandated ratio limits the number of apprentices being allowed into the system. That's the spin he's trying to put on it, but of course there's a very significant reason why this is in place. The ratio is there for a number of very good reasons.

Apprenticeship is very unique. It's a combination of classroom instruction and workplace training, and you need the direct supervision of a master journeyperson to be able to teach you the workplace aspects of the job. That's very simple. That's the nature of apprenticeship. So when you increase that ratio, you have considerably less supervision for that apprentice. That's very dangerous. You're getting apprentices who don't have the benefit of that kind of supervision.

There's also a public safety aspect. Since apprentices do work as part of their learning — for example, they are building this Legislature. These are the people who build our homes and our schools and our Legislature. They are in service sectors and motive sectors and industrial sectors. We rely on these people for so much. If untrained people are doing these jobs unsupervised, your safety, my safety and the safety of the people viewing at home is at risk. Of course, the terrifying aspect of this is that those problems don't show up right away, but in five years, 10 years. Go to a condominium in Vancouver and find out what happens when you have unskilled people doing work that you rely on. You'll find out why this is particularly dangerous.

There's another aspect to this, and let me try to illustrate it very simply. You have, let's say for the sake of argument, a one-to-one ratio, where you have one apprentice and one journeyperson supervising them. Let's say you have 10 people, so you'll have five and five.

If you change that to a ratio of nine apprentices to one journeyperson, which is possible under this kind of arrangement, what's going to happen? Well, employers are now hiring nine less-expensive people to do the job where they used to hire four journeypeople. What does that mean? It means that you'll have a cheaper labour

force. In fact, you'll have fewer opportunities for those apprentices after they leave and get their full certification and become certified tradespeople themselves because there will be more apprentices in the area. There will be less of a requirement for them to be able to get jobs. Interesting that by changing those ratios around, you are making it more difficult for those people, once they graduate, to get jobs.

Let me move on to the removal of the educational minimum standard. I just want to say at the outset that this is something that everybody has condemned, so I can't understand the rationale, why this government has chosen to take that out.

I'll read from the release of the Ontario Federation of Labour. It says, "The apprenticeship training changes proposed by the Harris government are not about creating jobs — they are about creating cheap labour and high school drop-outs," said Wayne Samuelson, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour."

The current standard was a minimum of grade 10 in the regulations. Now there will be no standard — no standard. What does that say? I'd like to refer to the comments of I think the member for Quinte, who said the Canadian Federation of Independent Business had commented recently about youth employment issues, as well they did. One of their recommendations talked about removing the stigma from the skilled trades sector, making it attractive — because it is an attractive profession. Currently — not after this legislation, not after things like Bill 31 — there are good-paying jobs for young people and for older workers who want to get into the skilled trade area. By removing the academic qualifications, by lowering them, not only do you encourage people to drop out of school, but what you're doing is saying to a young person in a high school class in Etobicoke: "If you can't make it academically, if you're not going to go to university or college, you can settle for the trades. That's what's in store for you."

Is that the kind of message you would use to promote something which is good, honest work at which you can make a very good living, or that you could prior to the Harris government's agenda? I don't think so. You are further stigmatizing the whole skilled trades area. I strongly suggest to the government members that they look at the actions they're taking. You want to strengthen it. You want to listen to the provincial advisory councils and enhance the kind of education you're going to need.

In fact, most trades wanted an increase in the mandated minimums. They said: "We want a solid academic background to be able to deal with the sophistication of the trades. We need to deal with re-skilling, with new and emerging technologies, with retraining, with upgrading. To do that, we need enhanced academic standards, not diminished or no standards at all."

We also need to have a certain level of maturity, and I'm not sure we have that guarantee with this change. It's very interesting. There was a study of the trades done in British Columbia. I will just read one of the conclusions of that study. It said that completion rates are higher for high

school graduates than for construction trade apprentices with incomplete high school in all the trade groups. Across every group, the most successful apprentices are those who have completed high school, those with the highest academic qualifications.

Why would this government be going in exactly the opposite direction? I must admit, I find it hard to fathom many of the things this government is doing, but putting public safety at risk like this, lowering standards, feeding into that stigma, is something which totally escapes me.

Deregulation of the mandated wages for apprentices: In current legislation there's a mandated wage rate schedule for the ratio from journey person to apprentice, how much someone is going to make. Now the wage rate will be set by the employer and the employee in negotiations. I can tell you, given the changes this government has made to labour legislation in this province, that balance is completely out of whack. Employee groups are finding themselves on the short end of the stick more often than not and are not in a position to negotiate those kinds of things. So if you're an apprentice, you're looking forward to minimum wage. Minimum wage is just not going to cut it in terms of being able to pay for the tuition, for your living expenses, for your mortgage, for your other expenses, your transportation and other kinds of things.

There is also a real concern because, as I said, the average age is 26: established people, people with families, people who are going to have face the rental housing market in many instances. This government has changed the rules in regard to rental housing. There is no more rent control, so your housing costs are skyrocketing. If you move — and for many in the trade areas, there has to be some mobility to go to where the jobs are. When you do that, what happens to your housing costs and your accommodation costs? They go up and up every time you move.

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I can't believe this government is making these kinds of changes, which are having such an impact, and then has the utter gall to say that they're removing barriers, that they're creating flexibility, that they're making changes to make it more attractive for young people and for others to get into the skilled trades area. I think not. There's just no way.

I'd like to outline some of the changes in the actual language of the legislation. They've changed the role of the industry-based provincial advisory council. These are councils which have equal representation from employers and from employees. It's a very balanced group which provides advice to the minister and to the sector. The previous legislation gave the PACs, the provincial advisory councils, an advisory role on all issues pertaining to apprenticeship. That's pretty categorical, all the issues pertaining to apprenticeship.

This new bill, Bill 55, changes the wording and the mandate. It says the role of the provincial advisory councils is "to promote high standards in" training and apprenticeship training, whatever that means. These co-operative bodies which had the ability to comment on all

matters pertaining to apprenticeship now can go out and promote high standards, whatever that means, with no enforcement capabilities.

This was a questionnaire put out by the Ministry of Education and Training in some of their earlier consultations. They asked some questions. They said, "What additional role with respect to standards, curriculum, exams can PACs play and how would you recommend this happen?" The PACs came back and said that at that time they had an advisory role. They said: "The PACs need the authority to undertake the above functions themselves." They need some authority. I don't find authority in "promote high standards in" training and apprenticeship training.

It says, "PACs should have a stronger say in setting wage levels, ratios and entry level requirements." Not in Bill 55, you don't. That doesn't exist here. It no longer exists. It's now to the vagaries of the market.

I'll go on. On the questionnaire it said, "How should the PACs go about fulfilling their new role in developing guidelines and how can PACs ensure that the guidelines are well understood and widely used?" According to the government's own document, it says, "The most consistent comment was that PACs should go about fulfilling their new role by having some enforcement mechanism for ensuring that there is compliance." Again ignored. I guess it really shows the level of commitment to consultation and the reason we had all the mea culpas from the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and Training.

There was another question: "What ideas do you have about the role of PACs in promotion, marketing, outreach to new employers?" They said: "We think we have a great role. We can do that." The government said, "You can certainly go out and promote high standards in training and apprenticeship training."

In terms of the questions the provincial advisory councils were asked, the provincial government did not follow the advice they were given, not one bit of it. They've watered it down. As I said earlier, it really shows you the "con" in consultation that this government uses.

This bill essentially changes the wording and the mandate and gives no real meat to the PACs' role. The ministry says they're getting a larger role in design and delivery. No, they're not. There is no larger role; in fact, it's a diminished role. When the consultation happened — and I outlined the consultation — the PACs were very glad that the government appeared to want to work with them and wanted to strengthen their role. I know that representatives of both industry and the employee groups are very — it's like they've had the heart ripped out of them to know that this government not only didn't listen but never had any intention of listening and has diminished that role. We know that Dave Johnson certainly isn't serious about giving them a role. We know that this minister isn't serious about accepting their recommendations.

There are some other very interesting changes in language. It changes from "employer" to "sponsor of

training." That is a very interesting term. What does that mean? It removes the role of the former local apprenticeship committees, that's for sure, but the feedback I have had from the provincial advisory councils and from other stakeholder groups is that they worry that "sponsors of training" will mean folks like municipalities who are looking to employ workfare recipients. Here you're going to have people earning essentially \$3 an hour taking the jobs of either apprentices at minimum wage, because now that's what the government is giving you, or of journey-people themselves.

I really think a number of these concerns outline why there needs to be public hearings into this bill. "Sponsor of training": What does that term mean? What is the government going to do? Why is there the need to change from "employer" to "sponsor of training"?

There are changes in the time requirements as well for programs. The previous bill required the training programs to be for two years, and there was a very good reason for that. These are jobs with a very high and specific degree of skill and precision. That's critical, so you need a minimum amount of time to be able to learn your craft, to go out and interact with the public, to make sure of the public safety or, in the service sector, that good service and good business practices are adhered to. The government has wiped that out. Two years was the minimum; it was up to five years in many of the trade areas that we all rely on. That's totally wiped out. Now you'll have, under the government's own changes, high school dropouts, people getting less education, working in minimum-wage jobs, a total change from what we have had.

This government, this bill, changes the process for training agreements or contracts and puts them into regulation, all in the name of eliminating red tape. That is a boondoggle if I've ever heard one. They claim to give apprentices the ability to progress through the programs at their own speed. "Learn at your own speed. Get out into the workforce. Public safety be damned and being able to get a full set of skills be damned. Don't worry about that. You will be able to get out there and work at that minimum-wage job." I have a real concern that apprentices won't benefit from this, that the public won't benefit from this. We need, at the very least, a two-year program to have a well-rounded education and a well-attained number of skills.

There are other provisions in the legislation as well. It allows part-time contract and self-employed workers to become apprentices. I really wonder, and I challenge any government member to tell me, how does a self-employed worker become an apprentice? How does that work? How would you do that? Who would supervise? You're self-employed. How can you become an apprentice if you're self-employed? I can't find anyone who can explain that to me. I see my friend scratching his head. He can't figure it out either. It's an utter mystery that any self-employed person could be an apprentice.

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There are other issues. There are administrative kinds of issues. Previously the minister couldn't make changes

through regulation; he had to make them through legislation, and I understand that's an onerous process. But we've seen this pattern of behaviour. We've seen Bill 160, which takes all the ability of the government and puts the regulation-making power into the hands of the minister, into the hands of the cabinet. Why? Well, when you do that, you don't have to be held accountable. Nobody has to know what's going on. You can make changes literally at will, by fiat. If anybody believes that in a democratic country that is the kind of thing people will put up with, they are totally wrong. These are the kinds of powers that dictators give themselves, to be able to make changes at will.

The reason we have debate is that there is a need for discussion, a need for dialogue, a need for refinement of legislation, a need for public input. That no longer takes place under the regulation-making power the government has. Why are there only nine pages in this bill? That's because there's no need. All it means is that the Minister of Education gives himself the power to regulate just about every aspect of apprenticeship at will. That's it: no more public consultation, no more discussion, no more dialogue, no more debate. "We're just going to regulate as we did with Bill 160," as we have seen in Bill 26, as we have seen in so many pieces of legislation that this government has brought forward on which they don't want to see any public input, don't want to see any discussion and don't want to see any debate, that there should be none. I can't really understand that kind of mindset from elected representatives to a body which is supposed to protect the public interest, that they have to hide behind closed doors, that they have to issue regulations from somewhere in some ministry building. Where is the public interest in that?

At the very least, we need to have public hearings. We need to understand some of these questions. We should see the draft regulations at the committee hearings, to find out what this minister's and what this government's true intentions are. I think we've seen an awful lot of their intention. I think we've been able to shine a light into some of those shadowy corners, and it's certainly not cobwebs. As Wayne Samuelson says, it's about cheap labour and high school dropouts. That's what this legislation is about.

Now the minister can make regulations regarding industrial committees' programs, criteria for certifying skilled workers, for recognizing qualifications and for literally every other issue, and now the act says that certain skills or skill sets may be designated as restricted so that some portions of the jobs need not be performed by apprentices or journeypeople. That's astounding. Let me repeat that. The act now says that certain skills or skill sets may be designated as restricted so that some portions of jobs need not be performed by apprentices or journeypersons; they can be done with training in a component of that job — training in a component of that job, so half a job.

Clearly this government and this minister can't be trusted to make these decisions. They have not proven

themselves trustworthy, not to the public of Ontario, not to this opposition, not to the stakeholders in the apprenticeship area. The minister has shown that he won't take recommendations. I think I've outlined how their sham consultation processes work.

As I said in my opening, I'd like to comment on what some of the stakeholder groups have been saying about this legislation, about what this government's direction is. I think some of the members read some endorsements. One of them, by the way, was from the labourers' group. I spoke with a fellow by the name of Cosmo Manella. He told me he's not in favour of tuitions. He told me he's not in favour of wage deregulation. There may be some small aspect, but by and large, this piece of legislation has support from hardly any stakeholder groups at all.

Quite a number of groups have been shut out of the process, have tried time and again to plead with this minister, to plead with this government, to tell them that they are on the wrong track, to tell them to stop and turn back before it's too late. Those pleas have fallen on deaf ears. I'll read to you again from the Ontario Federation of Labour, June 25:

"The Ontario government's legislation amending the province's apprenticeship system will encourage high school dropouts, lower the standards for skilled trades and create a pool of cheap labour for employers, the Ontario Federation of Labour says.

"The Ministry of Education and Training has launched tens of thousands of workers into a new world of work and pay without having had a meaningful discussion with the representatives of those workers before drafting this legislation."

It goes on to talk about youth. "Eliminating age and grade requirements will encourage high school dropouts and create a population of apprentices without the necessary foundation in academic subjects crucial to a skilled workforce." That's interesting. We're talking about technology, we're talking about mathematics, we're talking about literacy skills. I'll read that again: "create a population of apprentices without the necessary foundation in academic subjects crucial to a skilled workforce." Why? Cheap labour, high school dropouts. Interesting.

It eliminates standards. This is very interesting, because I heard the parliamentary secretary say about four times that this will in no way diminish the red seal program that is recognized for the skilled trades throughout this country. It said, "This" — Bill 55 — "will lead to chaos in the workplace and marketplace and will erode national standards such as the red seal program." Regardless of what the parliamentary assistant or the Minister of Education or any other member of this government wants to spin, it will erode national standards such as the red seal program.

"Elimination of ratios: The vast majority of learning of a trade takes place on the job. Apprentices learn by working with journeypersons. The more apprentices working under each journeyperson, the less the learning that takes place." Certainly there's an implication for the skills; certainly there's an implication for the public safety.

I'll read to you from Jerry Boyle, the business manager of the Ontario Pipe Trades Council.

"The new Apprenticeship and Certification Act, 1998, will destroy one of the finest apprenticeship systems in the world. 'These changes will jeopardize public safety, consumer protection and job prospects for young people,' said Boyle.

"The construction industry, both management and labour, have spent considerable time and energy advising the government on reasonable reforms to apprenticeship that would increase the quality of training and certification while improving job prospects for youth,' stated Mr Boyle." As I outlined earlier, "considerable time and energy advising" the minister.

However, "This advice was not only ignored, but the legislation introduced today" — this is back in June — "goes in a contrary and destructive direction." I really think that is very interesting: "The legislation introduced goes in a contrary and destructive direction." So the consultation they get they totally ignore, they go the exact opposite way, and the harmful and destructive effects it's going to have.

"Under the current act, apprentices can receive complete training in a trade so that well-educated, highly skilled youth have a chance to develop careers. The proposed changes put this in jeopardy,' said Boyle. 'By tempting youth into an apprenticeship system that will only teach them part of a trade, the government is sentencing youth of this province to dead-end, no-skill, and low-paying jobs.'" That is not in the interests of anyone in this province, to sentence our young people, who already have an appalling rate of unemployment in this province — and I might say that this government has done nothing to help that, has in fact only done everything in their power to hinder it — to dead-end, no-skill and low-paying jobs.

"It is hard to believe that we have an education minister that wants to remove grade 10 as a minimum standard.... The deskilling of trades or the lowering of academic and training standards does not create new jobs, it lowers the quality of existing ones. The only beneficiaries of such a system will be the unscrupulous looking for a cheap pool of unskilled labour." We're going to pander to those unscrupulous individuals who want a cheap pool of unskilled labour.

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"Ontario already has a highly efficient and effective apprenticeship training system, and only sound, reasonable reforms will improve job opportunities for youth while protecting consumers and safety standards,' said Boyle." Very interesting.

I have something from the Provincial Building and Trades Council. This is from Patrick Dillon, the business manager, June 25, right after the legislation was introduced:

"Construction labour and management representatives have tried to work co-operatively with the government" — I'm surprised they've tried, given this government's track record on working co-operatively with anybody, but

they have tried to work co-operatively — "to ensure positive reforms to Ontario's apprenticeship system," said Mr Dillon. 'It is obvious from today's announcement'" — this is June 25 — "that this advice has fallen upon deaf ears.'" Construction is the largest sector involved in apprenticeship training. This is the largest sector, they have a message for this government, and the government has deaf ears.

"In his statement, when referencing construction, the minister recognizes 'that the current legislation and training system has served some sectors well. We know, for example'" — and this is the minister — "'of the high quality of training in the construction industry,' yet the legislation fails to recognize a number of important recommendations" made to this government according to Mr Dillon.

"Specific areas of where the minister failed to listen to the industry" — in fact, this minister fails to listen to anybody — "include establishing criteria for the designation of compulsory certification for trades; establishing wage formulas in legislation; establishing a minimum standard for journey person/apprentice ratios."

There are several others, but those are three very significant ones.

I have something from Hugh Laird from the Interior Systems Contractors Association of Ontario: "I believe that the government's contemplated tuition for apprentices would do irreparable harm not only to my training centre but to all apprenticeable trades in this province." Irreparable harm.

These are the minutes from a meeting of the construction sector, I believe from their provincial advisory council. As I said, this is a group of an equal number of employers and employees. At the bottom, by the way, the sector representatives are Ron Groulx, a boilermaker, and James Moffat from the Sheet Metal Workers and Roofers. It says:

"It is the position of the construction sector" — and I would emphasize that that is not employers and that is not employees, but both of them — "that the following are the guiding principles upon which the following position paper was developed. It is noted that it is the position of this sector that these are not mutually exclusive.

"(1) The criteria are only to be used in consideration of making construction 'trades' compulsory (not to be used against skill sets).

"(2) Existing compulsory construction trades remain as they are in their entirety.

"(3) All construction trades should be compulsory provided that they meet established criteria.

"(4) Remove all reference to skill sets."

Another group the government has conned — oh, I mean consulted with, but they certainly haven't listened to.

I have here a newspaper article, and I'll be very brief. It says the government is "using the changes as another way of driving down wages," and they quote Pat Dillon, the business manager of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades of Ontario.

For such a small bill to contain so much, it's absolutely amazing. The purpose of this bill is to drive down wages. "Dillon said that adding tuition fees and dropping the wage ratios will cripple the apprenticeship system." I think earlier we heard "irreparable harm," we've heard "destruction," and now we've heard that we will cripple the system. "Both of those things are a disincentive to apprentices. To ask them to pay for the right to be an apprentice is an absolute disincentive."

Interesting, another barrier. In fact, it goes on to quote Sandra Clifford, who's here today: "An apprenticeship could become a minimum-wage job. It makes it financially unacceptable."

It goes on to quote Wayne Samuelson, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour: "'Imposing tuition fees and lowering wage requirements will eliminate apprenticeships as a viable option,' he said in the letter."

Isn't it interesting that just about every stakeholder has a very consistent message for this government. Their message is, as I said earlier: "Do not institute tuitions; do not lower the educational standards; do not deregulate the wages; do not change the two-year minimum program. Don't do all of those things." What did Dave Johnson say? He said: "Don't worry. Tell me your concerns." He could say: "We haven't drafted the regulations yet. Changes can still be made."

I know because my good friend from Scarborough Centre has said we're going to have public hearings. I certainly take him at his word, so I know we'll have a chance to discuss and debate. There is a compelling public reason there should be public hearings into this bill. Any time you start to put these kinds of barriers to opportunities for our young people, any time you place public safety at the significant risk this piece of legislation does, the public has a right to know, has a right to have input. It of course doesn't mean that this government will listen. As I've said, they haven't listened in the past; there's no reason to believe they're going to listen in the future. But if enough people come to those hearings, send a message strongly enough to this government, they'll be forced to listen, and if they don't now, I know Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus will be listening.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Hear, hear.

Mr Caplan: Thank you. Because that is a fundamental and significant difference between Mike Harris and Dalton McGuinty: Mike Harris doesn't listen. He says, "We're not going to listen to special interests." That's parents who are concerned about their children's safety when they go to school. Because who put those buildings up? They know that's a purchaser of a condominium done by unskilled labour. They're a special interest, according to Mike Harris.

Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals believe that people have a role to play, people can help to shape this and that there can be meaningful reforms to strengthen. There was the comment from my friend from Simcoe Centre earlier that the Liberals had never done anything. I certainly beg to differ, my colleague. We had an excellent minister, my

colleague from Scarborough North, Alvin Curling, a Minister of Skills Development, and significant work did take place in the apprenticeship and training area.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): What did he do?

Mr Caplan: He did quite a bit. In fact, the Premier's council on training had significant reforms. Unfortunately, the next government never chose to implement any of those.

Interjections.

Mr Caplan: I certainly can't help that. This government certainly has chosen not to implement any of those reforms at all, but they had great, wide consultation and discussion and agreement and consensus from all the stakeholder groups — from industry, from labour, from government, from training agencies. There was agreement, there was a common purpose and a common direction. It is there. We can achieve it. There is a difference and, I say this in complete candour to my friends opposite, there is an alternative. The alternative is the way things are done by the Liberal caucus, by Dalton McGuinty.

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The public of Ontario does not have to stand by and watch this government turn its back on every stakeholder group that exists in the apprentice area. This government has made a habit of not listening. This government in fact is implementing tuitions. We know their record on tuitions. They're eliminating the ratios for journeypersons and apprentices. They're removing the minimum educational standards. They're eliminating the mandated wage for apprentices. They're paying lip service to the provincial advisory councils. They're changing from employers to sponsors of training. They're changing the time of apprentice programs from a minimum of two years to nothing. They're allowing — and I still can't believe this one — self-employed workers to become apprentices. I know my good friend from York-Mackenzie will try to explain in his very insightful comments how a self-employed worker can be an apprentice. They're centralizing all the functions through a regulation and —

Interjection: I'm going to teach myself.

Mr Caplan: That's right, very good. You're going to teach yourself and I'm sure you'll be very skilled. I can't wait to hear the comments.

They are making these kinds of changes through regulation, through a concentration of government power, shutting out any meaningful dialogue, any meaningful discussion. It is the hallmark of this government to have the absolute attitude that no one has anything else to contribute, no one has any constructive ideas, no one can share in any of the process. It is this government and this government alone who has divided the people of Ontario and it is this government that will pay the price in eight months or a year from now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Lessard: I just want to compliment the member for Oriole for praising my former campaign manager, Wayne Samuelson, the current president of the OFL, for the work

he's been doing with respect to apprenticeship training in Ontario.

He's also pointed out that there is really a con in the consultation process; I thought that was a pretty good line. He talked about what this apprenticeship reform is all about. Apprentices are going to be forced to pay tuition fees, employers are going to be able to pay apprentices lower wages. The journey-person-to-apprentice ratios are going to be eliminated, and this is going to lead to lower standards for apprentices. The two-year minimum for contracts is being dropped and the current compulsory certification of trade system is going to be undermined.

You would wonder, after listening to the speech from the member for Oriole, with all of its criticisms and the reference to the criticisms from the OFL and other people who are in skilled trades and the construction trades, why the government would be undertaking the reform of apprenticeship legislation they're doing now. I think there is a very good reason for that, and part of it is because of the withdrawal of funding that's being anticipated by the federal Liberal government as part of their employment insurance reforms. Why are they doing those reforms? They're trying to remove millions of dollars from apprenticeship training in Ontario.

I'd like the member to refer to that in his speech, because I thought that the Premier, when he commented today, said that the surplus of employment insurance funds rightly belong to the workers of this country who paid in far in excess of what's needed. The member should be knocking on the door of Paul Martin and saying that money should be used for apprenticeship training here in Ontario.

Mr Smith: I too have to comment on the Liberal position. We heard a lot about what Dalton McGuinty's prepared to do, but what I can tell you is what the federal Liberals have done, and that is withdraw some \$30 million from the apprenticeship training system. In fact, in 1999-2000 they'll be providing no funding at all for training in this particular province.

Earlier today, as my colleague from Windsor mentioned, we heard the Premier of this province stand in his place and address the issue of the EI surplus. We heard the leader of the New Democratic Party stand in his place. We didn't hear Dalton McGuinty stand today and give us his opinion on the issue of the national surplus and how it should be allocated for employees in this province.

I want to as well mention that the member raised issues concerning minimum age and grade entry. I want to re-emphasize that the minimum age remains at 16 in the proposed legislation. The minimum grade 10 is not in the present act and so it's not changed as part of the tabled bill. Grade 10 is in general regulation under the current bill.

The member also went on at length to talk about provincial advisory committees. He managed only to reference one particular power that the PACs may have. Presently it's very general in terms of their advice to the minister. This proposed piece of legislation broadens that on top of that advisory role and adds six areas of

opportunity for industry and workers to be involved in making recommendations to the Minister of Education and Training, including the development and revising of apprenticeship programs for approval by the director involving curricula, training standards and examinations. It's in that context that this legislation has been broadened to provide greater opportunity for industry involvement with respect to Bill 55 and training opportunities in this province.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I'll look forward to the day when the parliamentary secretary to education gets up and explains why Ontario is the only province that doesn't have a training agreement with the federal government. Perhaps we'll leave that for another day.

I want to congratulate the member for Oriole on what I can only describe as a thorough exposé of this government's legislation which is quite clearly shown to be nothing more than a cash grab and a massive deregulation. It obviously shows no real concern for apprenticeship and for training. It certainly doesn't stand as an improvement to access, which the member for Oriole has pointed out very clearly.

How can it be an improvement to access when it introduces the charging of tuition, although 50% of apprentices, as the member for Oriole has said, have indicated that they would not have become apprentices if they'd had to pay the tuition. This isn't just because of a reluctance to go into debt. This government likes to take its pound of flesh out of everybody and force them into greater debt. When the average age of apprentices is 26, and many of the apprentices actually have families and are supporting them, taking on debt to do a training program is rather daunting indeed, so this will not improve access as the member for Oriole has said.

It's particularly galling for them to start introducing tuition for apprentices at the same time that they decide they're going to have apprentices working at what will be minimum wage. The government's answer is, "Well, they can go out and bargain something better than minimum wage with their employers." Exactly what clout are apprentices going to have in the collective bargaining process?

Then there is the issue of improving quality. There's certainly no improvement of quality here because they are dropping the minimum grade requirement. The ministry says: "No, that's in regulation. We haven't dropped it." Nor have they said they're going to put any minimum grade regulation into place. Quite clearly, they have no intention of enforcing a minimum standard of grade 10. I have this belief that the government is intentionally dropping any reference to minimum grade requirements because it ties so nicely into their proposed secondary school curriculum reforms. What they really want to do is screen kids earlier, get them out earlier and save money by not having to educate them.

Mr Wildman: I want to congratulate my friend from Oriole on his dissertation with regard to this legislation on apprenticeship that is before us. As he pointed out, this is part of the Conservative agenda of deregulation. It is not

going to improve access; it's going to harm access because of, among other things, the tuition requirement.

I found it interesting that my Conservative colleagues here in the House tried to dress this up by talking about removing the barriers, that this would mean more apprenticeships because they would be removing barriers. The barriers they're talking about are the regulations that ensure quality training for apprentices. They're removing the ratio of journeypersons to apprentices. In other words, you're going to have a lot more low-paid, unskilled people being hired by companies with very few skilled people to give them any training.

The utmost irony of this bill is that it will allow, as the member said, a self-employed person to be an apprentice. How on earth are self-employed persons going to get training if there's no one else there to train them? I suppose it's similar to the way most members in this House learn to become members.

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This is just plain ridiculous. What this is about, in removing the minimum grade requirement, is streaming kids, not just streaming them in high school but streaming them right out of the education system. The member for Oriole had me along with him right to the end until he started talking about the fact that there was an alternative. I think in Nickel Belt we showed the alternative to this government. We showed what the real alternative is and the Liberals collapsed in the election campaign because they had no real alternative.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Oriole has two minutes to respond.

Mr Caplan: I'd like to thank the members for Windsor-Riverside, Middlesex, Fort William and Algoma for their comments in regard to my discussion.

To the members for Windsor-Riverside and Middlesex, who talked about the federal government and their withdrawal from training: very interesting. This is true. It was at the request of the provinces. The federal government has successfully completed negotiation with Roy Romanow's government in Saskatchewan, an NDP government; Glen Clark's government in British Columbia, another NDP government; Liberal governments; Conservative governments; even Ralph Klein's government in Alberta; with separatist governments. It just seems that the only person who can't negotiate, who can't get along, who can't work out a deal is Mike Harris.

Mike Harris and the Ontario Conservative government are not willing to negotiate in good faith the same kind of deal that every province and territory in Confederation has. I think you've really got to ask yourself, what is the real agenda of the Harris government when it comes to training? I think lower wages and high school dropouts, it's clear. It's not like other provinces and the federal government that have looked to improve and have an efficient system.

Interjections.

Mr Caplan: Yes, the federal government is interested in working co-operatively with the provinces. It's Mike Harris and the provincial government who will not work with anybody: not parents, not teachers, not students, not

apprentices, not trades, not employers, nobody. They have no vision for training; they have no vision for skills and for employment in this province. They will pay for that lack of vision. It is the federal government in Ottawa that has had the wherewithal to negotiate with every province.

The Deputy Speaker: I just want to remind you that it is not allowed to speak out and talk across the aisle.

Further debate?

Mr Lessard: I want to start out by saying what is found in Bill 55, the bill to totally revamp and reform apprenticeship training programs in Ontario. This is what it says in that bill. This is what it is all about: For the first time apprentices in Ontario are going to be forced to pay tuition, this from a government that campaigned so heartily in the last election against new taxes, that said: "A user fee is a tax." We shouldn't have new user fees. They've worked so hard to try and get rid of things that are called taxes, but these are the people who are going to end up having to pay for that tax scheme. It's students, it's apprentices who are trying to get an education, trying to get better employment opportunities who are going to be forced to pay taxes, tuition fees to fund the Tory tax scheme.

Employers are going to be able to pay lower wages to apprentices. The way the system stands right now, the wages of an apprentice are by and large a ratio of what a journeyperson makes. That protection for apprentices is going to be removed so that apprentices are going to be forced to negotiate their wages with employers. I can think of only one result of that sort of unbalanced negotiation: It's going to force down the wages of apprentices. I don't think there is going to be any other alternative, really. It's also going to replace the journeyperson-to-apprentice ratios. So instead of having two apprentices to one journeyperson, we may have 10 apprentices to a journeyperson, or 20 or 25. Who knows? Who is it who's going to be supervising apprentices when they're on the job trying to learn a new skilled trade? That really makes me wonder what quality of training apprentices are going to be able to receive if they're working with a journeyperson who is working with a dozen or two dozen people. That's one concern I have.

The other concern I have is, what about health and safety standards for those apprentices who are working in an environment like that? They're on the job trying to learn their trade. I think it's incumbent upon journeypersons to ensure that the work they're doing is done in a safe manner, not only for the apprentices but also for the people who are going to benefit from the work that's being done. If I'm going to be working in or attending a facility or a building that has been constructed by a skilled tradesperson, I want to know it is safe. I want to know that things like nuclear power plants are built by skilled tradespersons who are well supervised, well educated and well trained. I want to know that water systems that supply the potable water to our homes and to our buildings have been installed by persons who know their trade as well, persons who have been supervised by journeypersons who know their trade.

This is also going to lower standards that have been included in the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act previously. I think this is all part of the government's race-to-the-bottom agenda, an agenda that wants to lower wages, lower standards, move us to a system like they have in the United States of voluntary self-compliance, removal of regulation in the name of it being red tape and removing all of those protections and standards that have made Ontario the great place that it has been in which to live, to work and to raise a family. It also removes the two-year minimum for contracts, so that prescribed time period for people who enter into contracts with employers is now going to be removed. It also undermines the current system of compulsory certification for trades.

All in all, this really is a massive deregulation of apprenticeship. It eliminates standards and minimum requirements. It allows tuition and the lower wages for apprentices. I believe this really is an attempt to distract attention from federal and provincial cuts to apprenticeship funding, while at the same time the government likes to talk a good line that what they're doing is really expanding opportunities for apprentices.

2100

As I said in my remarks earlier, this isn't just the Mike Harris government that we're being critical of here; a lot of these changes are the result of the federal Liberal government in Ottawa cutting \$40 million per year from apprentice training programs in Ontario. That all came about as a result of changes to the employment insurance program, and we know what those changes have resulted in. They have resulted in it being more difficult for people who lose their job to be able to qualify for employment insurance benefits. They have also made those who do qualify for benefits able to collect only a smaller amount of insurance than before, and for a shorter time period than they had been able to before.

It really has resulted in some parts of the country being unfairly treated as a result of the changes that have been made. Of course, we also know that it has resulted in an incredible surplus in the employment insurance fund, a surplus that Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien are now trying to get their hands on, saying, "We should use that to pay down the deficit or give a tax break" — to those who I know are the most well off in the country. It's the same agenda that we've seen the Mike Harris government undertake here in Ontario. We don't want to see that money being used for tax cuts for those who are the most well off.

The Premier made a statement this afternoon in the Legislature. He said the Prime Minister and Paul Martin were considering ways to legalize the use of the employment insurance surplus — a surplus built solely from the contributions made by hard-working women and men — for their own political purposes. To that I say shame on them for even considering doing something like that. What they're attempting to do really is just legalize thievery. This is money that has been contributed to by the hard-working people in Ontario and the rest of Canada and by employers as well. This is money that belongs to

workers, by and large, and it's money that should be used for insurance for people who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own and to enable them to try and get back into the workforce, and that means for retraining, for apprenticeship training as well.

Although we agree with the Premier and his criticism of that federal Liberal agenda to try to seize the employment insurance surplus, we disagree that the intention should be to eliminate premiums for employers or give a tax break for those who are the most well off. We think that surplus should be used for retraining. It should be used to improve benefits for those who, through no fault of their own, lose their jobs. This is money that is contributed by employees. Why should they not benefit from that contribution they've made?

Many who are watching this will probably be wondering what the apprenticeship scheme is all about. What is it that we're being so critical of this government with respect to? The apprenticeship system is a system that has, by and large, worked fairly well for over 30 years in providing a skilled workforce in Ontario. It is a system that involves hundreds of thousands of workers here in Ontario, and it affects 67 regulated trades. That's how many regulated trades there are in Ontario. It's a work-based training program, where students or young adults spend close to 90% of their time learning skills while they're on the job. It's a system that has been working very well, a system that ensures that young people have an opportunity to gain skills while they're working in an environment where they have adequate supervision by well-trained journeypersons.

Why are these changes being made? As I indicated, a \$40-million federal government cutback has been forcing these changes to Ontario's apprenticeship laws. When they were forced with those cuts, of course some changes had to be made, and what we're seeing now are the results.

My friend from Oriole mentioned the agreements that have been negotiated with other provinces and the federal government. Those are referred to in this fancy book that has been put out by the government that's called *Better Skills, More Jobs: Ontario's Plan for Tomorrow's Job Market*. It makes a number of statements. "People with the right skills are essential to Ontario's economic health and growth." I don't think anybody can disagree with that. It says as well, "The federal government has not yet agreed to provide the same level of funding for training and employment services for individual unemployed Ontarians as it does for the unemployed in other provinces." It really refers to the unfairness Ontario is suffering as a result of the federal Liberal government. It refers as well to talks to "convince the federal government to treat Ontarians fairly and recognize the contribution Ontarians make to the creation of jobs and wealth in Ontario."

It says that on June 30, 1999, the federal government is going to withdraw its support for training in Ontario. Why is it the federal Liberal government can't come to an agreement with Ontario? I think my friend from Oriole was implying that if they had a Liberal government

dealing with a Liberal government in Ottawa, maybe we'd have this agreement. He didn't say that but I thought that was where he was heading. He did mention that they had an agreement with British Columbia, an NDP government, and Saskatchewan, an NDP government as well, so I don't think that's what he meant. I think this is just another example of the unfair treatment Ontario is receiving at the hands of the federal Liberal government, an unfairness that for their own political reasons the federal government wants to perpetuate.

On June 25, the last day of the session of the Legislature, the long-awaited bill to reform the apprenticeship legislation was introduced. We wondered why it took the minister so long to finally introduce that legislation, much anticipated by so many around here. We wondered why he waited until the last day of the session to introduce that. He tried to lead us to believe that he was having some consultation, I guess, before the introduction of this. We've heard that the people who said they should have been consulted aren't happy with this legislation, and that the people who were supposedly consulted were saying there wasn't a whole lot of consulting going on. There were some briefings and some meetings, but when it came to listening to their concerns, they felt those concerns weren't being listened to and certainly aren't reflected in this legislation. I suppose that's not really unusual for this government. They've been accused more than once of not listening to people's concerns, to their criticism.

We have one further opportunity to ensure that people have a chance to express their views on this legislation and that is when we have public hearings. I was pleased to hear from the member for Simcoe Centre this evening that we will have public hearings with respect to this bill, because I think we really need them.

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In his statement before the Legislature, the Minister of Education and Training, Dave Johnson, said, "If this bill receives royal assent, it would complement reform in our high schools." That was a direct quote from him. When people hear that this is going to somehow enhance or complement reform that's taking place in the high school system right now, I think most people would be justified in their fear, when they see the number of high schools that are going to be forced with closure in the next couple of months as the result of the reforms this government is undertaking with respect to Bill 160.

In my own area two of the schools that are slated to be closed as a result of those reforms are close to where I live: Walkerville collegiate institute and Lowe high school. It's unfortunate that those two schools are on the list for closure because they are the only schools that are close to the downtown area in Windsor, and Walkerville collegiate institute is a centre of excellence. They have a performing arts centre there. It's the only place in the city and in the county that has a performing arts centre. I'm pleased to say that was a school my own mother graduated from. I would like to see my son someday be able to graduate from Walkerville high school, but he may be

denied that opportunity if the Essex-Windsor school board is forced to go through with closing that school.

The other school that is on the list for closure as well is Lowe. Lowe has been serving the community for over 75 years and has been providing technical education for a great many students in the Windsor area. They have had well-developed shop programs and have turned out many of the apprentices who have come from the education system in the Windsor area. It would be tragic if a school like Lowe were going to be faced with being closed. It's a school, as I said, that serves the inner-city area of Windsor, and as a result of its location a great deal of its population is made up of persons from different ethnic backgrounds and from different nations, whose parents have come to our community and their sons and daughters attend that school.

The Tory reforms to education, like the reforms to apprenticeship, the reforms to health care and the reforms to the delivery of community services, pit people against one another. In our community, we're seeing that Walkerville high school has to defend itself at the board level, and that Lowe, and schools on the west side of the city such as Forster, and out in the county have to try and defend themselves. There is Western high school, which is another technical school, by the way, which provides as part of its curriculum programs that lead to apprenticeship training.

All of these schools have to fight against one another before the board to try and argue for their existence. It's inappropriate, it's unfair, and schools and parent councils shouldn't be forced to undertake that exercise. There needs to be a better way, and that is something I see starting to develop now as organizations like the Ontario Federation of Agriculture come to the defence of small rural schools in rural communities which are going to see their communities possibly disappear if their schools close.

Parents in the Windsor area are preparing to make representations to the board. One of those groups of parents has some recommendations about what can be a better way for boards that are considering the impact of this government's unfair funding formula that is forcing boards to close their schools. I want to quote from a document that they prepared to present to the board:

"It appears to us that there is a possibility to keep all of the schools in the system open if programs are reallocated. At the same time, schools having excess space should have wings closed. They should be renovated in preparation for marketing to local organizations and businesses. Alternatively, they should have wings closed to permit their use by the elementary panel in order to alleviate crowding in that panel."

That seems to be a far more reasonable approach to trying to deal with school closings than what this government has in mind, and that is a divide-and-conquer mentality, setting up arbitrary deadlines. They've set up December 31 as a deadline by which they want all of these school closing decisions to be made. It is putting parent groups and school boards in a very unfortunate

position because it's difficult for them to prepare and make these alternative suggestions with such a short timeline.

We know that by closing some of these schools they are moving students to other schools. One of the schools where overcrowding is anticipated as a result is in my riding, Riverside Secondary School. It's in an area where there's a great deal of housing being developed right now. We expect that there are going to be thousands more families moving into that area and hundreds more students going to that high school. Where is there going to be any capacity to place these additional students if the other high schools are closed? They're going to end up in a year or two having to put portable classrooms outside in the field at Riverside high school if these other schools are closed because of the short-sightedness of this government.

The Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board has decided they are not going to adhere to that arbitrary deadline of December 31. They have said that the board has established a policy that will allow for adequate time for consultation. That comes from Raymond Lussier, the director of the separate board. What they are doing at that board is saying, "We're not going to come out right away and publish a list of all of these schools that are going to be closed and then have parents pitted against one another." They are not going to do the bidding of the Harris government in their school-closing agenda. They are going to give parents an opportunity to make some suggestions overall about how they think the reorganization of the school system should take place and look at it on a more global basis, and are not going to find themselves constricted by the December 31 guideline.

I hope there are other school boards that are taking a similar approach and are able to convince the government that they should give an extension to that December 31 deadline. The Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board has asked that this be for two years. I think that's a reasonable suggestion, one that has been refused by the government.

I raise that just because that has been this government's approach to consultation. It has been a lot of pursuing the agenda of their tax scheme. They promised that they were going to give a 30% tax break to — well, they said everybody was going to get a 30% tax break. I'm not sure whether that's how it worked out for everybody. We know that some people benefit a little bit more than others. But after they made that promise, they had to figure out where they were going to get the money from. That's really what is driving this agenda and that's what is driving the agenda when it comes to apprenticeship reform: How are they going to find the savings to satisfy their promise of the phony tax scheme?

We know that in addition to the cuts that I referred to that have been made by the federal government, there have been corresponding cuts made by the provincial government as well. In the estimates for 1998-99, it shows the reduction in spending at the Ministry of Education and Training for apprenticeship and training services. It went from \$94.6 million in 1996-97 to \$58.3 million in 1998-99, an incredible reduction in the funding for

apprenticeship and training programs. The current government can focus some of their blame on the federal Liberals, as I have as well, but part of this agenda is to reduce spending for apprenticeship and training programs.

2120

I have to ask myself, as many of my colleagues are asking themselves: How is it that this government expects to improve apprenticeship training opportunities for young people and to make the system more accessible, to encourage more people to get involved in apprenticeship training programs, while at the same time they're spending less? Something doesn't add up here. I just can't figure it out. How do you make the system better and get more people to want to get involved in apprenticeship training programs when you're taking millions of dollars out of the system? I don't know how they can do it. I think that when people like the OFL say the proposed changes that are being made by this government are bad for workers in Ontario, they have a good point.

My friend from Oriole earlier on was mentioning the work that Wayne Samuelson, the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, has been doing with respect to this. I know he has been assisted a great deal by Sandra Clifford, as well from the OFL, and by people like Bob Chernecki, who was here yesterday to present a news conference indicating his criticism of this legislation. Also with us this evening is James Moffatt from the sheet metal workers, who I know has been very closely involved in following the development of this legislation.

What they are saying in their criticism is that this is going to eliminate standards. It's going to permit corporations to establish standards of apprenticeship in skilled trades, and it's going to really lead to chaos in the workplace and the marketplace.

They are diluting compulsory certification. This is something there is consensus on, that compulsory certification must be retained and expanded, not weakened as this government is intending to do. It needs to be expanded in order to enhance the health and safety of workers, to protect consumers and to protect the environment as well, and to ensure that we have higher training standards in Ontario. We should always be striving for excellence, raising the bar, not lowering the bar as we continuously see this government wanting to do.

They are eliminating the two-year contract. This is going to cause skills levels to drop. The contract between employers and apprentices ensures that time is spent in the workplace acquiring the skills that are necessary to develop well-rounded and skilled tradespeople.

They are critical of the elimination of ratios. The vast majority of learning of a trade takes place on the job. Apprentices learn by working with journeypersons. The more apprentices that are working with each journeyperson, the less learning takes place. Sounds like common sense to me, to borrow a much-maligned phrase.

They are also eliminating the wage requirements. They are very critical of that. The labour movement advocates decent rates of pay for all workers. It's wrong in principle to eliminate current wage requirements. It's short-sighted,

because if other worker training options are available, apprentices will choose to learn or work elsewhere.

There is another irony about what the government is trying to propose. They're saying, "Not only will we enhance the opportunity for apprentices and encourage them, but we're going to charge them tuition fees." So they're going to have a big debt load after they take their apprenticeship programs. They're going to reduce the minimum wage for apprentices as well, so that anybody who is thinking about getting into apprenticeship training has got to think, "Is this really what I want to get into if I think that wage rates are going to be going down?" When it comes to making those choices, people who might be thinking about apprenticeship or thinking about pursuing some other kind of occupation may not choose to get into apprenticeship.

I kind of wonder how the government is going to live up to the promises of the numbers of people that they expect to be encouraged to pursue apprenticeship training opportunities as a result of this legislation, just as I've been very skeptical about the promises they have made with respect to job creation. In the last couple of months we've actually seen a net decline in the number of jobs in Ontario, not an increase. Certainly following that course that I see job creation taking now, they're never going to reach that 725,000 they promised in the Common Sense Revolution, that is for sure.

What this is really heading towards is the de-skilling of the workforce. I know this is something that a great many

people are quite concerned about. Certainly it's highest among the building trades and industrial unions such as auto and steel and other industries that have active apprenticeship training programs.

Just this afternoon I got a call from Gord Campbell. He's with CAW Local 1520 in St Thomas. He is concerned about the future of apprenticeship training programs and how they are going to accommodate for them in the upcoming round of collective bargaining. We know that if Bill 55 goes through, there are going to be tuition fees for students, increased fees for people pursuing apprenticeship. In those unionized sectors of the economy where people who want to become apprentices are lucky to have that negotiated into their collective agreement, employers are going to have to come up with increased amounts for their contribution to cover the increased costs that are going to result from Bill 55. That's certainly a concern for employers, I'm sure, who have unionized workforces. That's just one of the many concerns that I have had brought to my attention as a result of the introduction of Bill 55.

There are a great many other criticisms that I could bring up, but I see that the hour is late. If you think this is an appropriate time to adjourn, I'd be more than happy to take my seat now and resume when this bill is recalled on another day.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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Second Session, 36th Parliament

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(Hansard)**

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Wednesday 7 October 1998

Mercredi 7 octobre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 7 October 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 7 octobre 1998

The House met at 1329.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): The Ontario Liberal Party believes that the preservation and promotion of heritage in our province is too important to be pushed aside as it has been by the Mike Harris government. As we approach the new millennium and we turn the page on the last century, you would think that our provincial government would recognize the value of the past and would be working overtime to protect, preserve and promote our great heritage.

But sadly, what we've seen over the course of the last three years is a government that has virtually abandoned this vital link to our past. We have seen dramatic cuts in support to Ontario's museums and community heritage organizations, and in fact a denial of any support to new museums in our province.

We have been witness to a withdrawal of all support to our local architectural community advisory committees, thereby removing all incentives for the preservation and restoration of designated heritage sites.

It's clear that we need to update the Ontario Heritage Act so that we can properly protect and maintain our natural and built heritage. Yet this government has made absolutely no moves in that direction.

The Minister of Culture has even refused to honour her public commitment to set up a heritage advisory committee for the province, a commitment that we call on her to make today.

The people of Ontario need a government that will stand up for our heritage, a government that understands that the promotion and protection of our heritage must remain a crucial part of all our communities.

On behalf of Ontario's hard-working heritage community and for all Ontarians concerned about their local heritage, I demand that this government take heed of the destruction their inaction has caused and recognize that such deliberate neglect will not be forgotten.

HOME CARE

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Home care in the eastern counties of this province is in real difficulty because of a lockout that the Victorian Order of Nurses has imposed on 175 nurses. These registered nurses are members of Locals 42, 49, 67 and 152 of the Ontario Nurses' Association. They were locked out by their employer on September 17 and they are not able to provide the care to their patients that they want to provide.

The leader of the group, Marilyn Dixon, says they understand that this lockout is caused by the government's policies, the policy of this government to provide a market-based model for the provision of home care. It is forcing reputable agencies like the Victorian Order of Nurses who have paid their nurses well and have had a good reputation of care into a position where they must ask for concessions.

These nurses are on strike because they cannot agree to the concessions they are being required to make. They believe it will interfere with the quality of care. We ask this government to change its market-based policy.

MUSKOKA-GEORGIAN BAY ECONOMY

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I am pleased to report that the Muskoka-Georgian Bay economy is alive with entrepreneurial spirit, with increasing employment, economic activity and a dramatically lower welfare caseload.

Further evidence of the strength of the local economy was seen this summer when the town of Midland reported that building permits were up from the same time last year, from 129 to 170, with total building activity valued at over \$4 million in Midland. Building activity is also on the rise in other parts of my riding.

Investments such as this have played an important role in creating jobs in Muskoka-Georgian Bay. In August, 3,000 new positions were created in Muskoka and the larger economic region including Victoria county, Northumberland, Haliburton and Peterborough. In this economic region, in August, the unemployment rate was 7.8%, down from 8.3% a year earlier. At the same time, in the Midland-Orillia area the unemployment rate was 6.2%, the lowest rate in six years for the region.

Simcoe county's welfare rolls are declining, due largely to the Ontario Works program. Since June 1995, the county's caseload has dropped nearly 35%. In Muskoka,

the welfare caseload has declined by 61% since June 1995, from 1,998 cases in June to 775 in August 1998.

Much of the credit for the growth of this economy goes to the business community, which I would like to congratulate today.

LOBBYIST REGISTRATION

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): Yesterday the government introduced Bill 69, the Lobbyist Registration Act. Hallelujah. After two years and six months, after four ministerial statements, we finally have lobbyist registration for Ontario. Seeing that this vaunted legislation is a comma-for-comma copy of the federal legislation — there's nothing new here — we have to ask, why the delay?

Let us remember why this legislation is being introduced: to protect the public interest, to ensure the integrity of the government process, to avoid the culture of preferential treatment on the basis of who you know and how much you're willing to contribute to the governing party. This legislation should have been introduced at the beginning of this government's term, not now, near the end of its term. This legislation should have been in place when Mike Harris's government was privatizing road maintenance contracts, privatizing jails, holding bids for casinos, contracting out office management, closing hospitals etc.

If we'd had this legislation in place, we could have avoided the impropriety that clouded the Niagara casino contract. We would have known that Michael French, who was under contract with the government to advise on how the lucrative casino contracts were going to be awarded, was at the same time on a \$100,000 casino contract for one of the bidders that was rated third and ultimately won the Niagara casino contract. Had this legislation been in place, as promised two and a half years ago, this clear, blatant conflict of interest would have been avoided by a responsible government.

EDUCATION

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): Today there's a conference taking place here in Toronto. It's called the second annual Canadian Education Industry Summit. This is the Canadian conference for investment in the education-for-profit industry. Participants are going to hear from American and Canadian speakers promoting privatization and investment in for-profit education. Guess who one of the speakers is? The federal Liberal Minister of Trade, Sergio Marchi.

This is simply outrageous. The federal government has no business endorsing a conference promoting the privatization of public education. The federal Liberal government should not be promoting its sale to the highest bidder. If Mr Marchi turned up to encourage investors who want to privatize Canada's health care system, Canadians would be demanding his resignation. Public education is just as important as public health care. We know the federal government's response to the crisis in post-

secondary education. It has been to cut funding, cut programs, and now to turn over what's left to the private sector.

Privatizers won't be satisfied with freezing tuition fees that are already causing huge student debt. Students will be forced to pay more to return a profit to investors. Privatized education will make investors rich at the expense of our children and youth.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): I'd like to inform the members of this House about a very unique project taking place in my riding. Road safety is an issue that is important to every Ontarian, and an issue that I have been proud to sponsor in my Etobicoke community.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the dedicated members of 22 division of the Toronto police service and members of the Maximum 50 campaign community organization for working hard to combat high speeds on our local Etobicoke roadways.

The inception of the Maximum 50 campaign began with the efforts of Constables Ken Ball and Ted Holtzheuser from 22 division in Etobicoke, who identified dangerous patterns of speeding on our local roadways. With encouragement from Staff Inspector Roy Whittle and Sergeant Bill Turnbull, and with community backing from the chair and founding member of the committee, Mr Robert DiVito, as well as local Islington ratepayers' and residents' association president, Ross Vaughan, the Maximum 50 campaign was successfully launched.

I have been proud to contribute to this effort that saw 3,500 tickets issued in its last operational session and an incredible 200 tickets issued on the first day of the new operation this fall. I congratulate the officers of 22 division and members of the Maximum 50 campaign for their dedication to creating a safer Etobicoke community for ourselves and our children.

1340

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On May 5, 1995, Mike Harris said to the students of Ontario, "You'll have to end up selling more chocolate bars to pay for some of those things on your own." What foreshadowing — except that Mike Harris was talking about the NDP's education policy. Little did the people of Ontario know then that there would be no difference between the NDP policy and the Mike Harris policy regarding the pupils of Ontario.

If in fact the funding formula is so great, why are so many schools in Ontario forced to raise funds through the sale of chocolate bars, almonds, magazines, pizza and hot dogs? Why is Mike Harris forcing the children of Ontario to go door to door selling goods in order to get a complete education?

If the funding formula is so great, why is St Anthony school forced to sell spaghetti dinners in order to buy math, science and technology supplies? Why is Pius XII

forced to sell baked goods in order to buy computers? Why is St David school selling chocolate bars and turkeys to buy school supplies, for transportation, school uniforms, computers and library supplies? Why is Lansdowne Public School forced to sell magazines and chocolate-covered almonds to pay for school excursions and resources? Why is Algonquin Road Public School forced to sell Nevada tickets to pay for student activities? Why is St Raphael school holding regular bingos to pay for schoolyard improvements?

The real question is, if the funding formula is so great, why is Mike Harris forcing the kids of Ontario to go door to door doing the job this government should be doing?

FRANCOPHONE SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I want to bring before the House a concern about francophone education in this province and the inadequate approach this government has taken to dealing with the problems faced by the new francophone boards as they start up.

Number one, the government has not taken into account the needs of francophone teachers and boards in their collective bargaining this fall, considering that these boards were not even in existence before the beginning of September. It is unfair to the francophone community and to francophone teachers and the new francophone district boards that they will be unable to reach tentative collective agreements prior to the passage of legislation that controls what they can or cannot negotiate with regard to teacher working conditions, while other boards, separate and public, in the English system are allowed to do so.

Also, the division of assets between existing boards and these new francophone boards, be they public or Catholic, has not gone as it should. In the northeast, it was clear that the francophone community had one desire, and that was to make sure their schools had a critical mass of students which would allow them to get the options they need. Instead, the Education Improvement Commission decided against their desires.

I hope the government will take that into account —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Statements.

SISTERS OF ST JOSEPH

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I take the opportunity today to rise in the House to tell our members about the Sisters of St Joseph of Peterborough.

At the closing of St Joseph's facility as a hospital, we have reached a milestone in health care. We, the community of Peterborough, owe a great deal of debt to these wonderful nuns. For 108 years these sisters worked in our community where they administered care and compassion to the sick, the injured and the heart-weary. Their serenity was very evident whenever we visited St Joe's, as it was affectionately known.

Their dedication and commitment extended through the difficult years of the Depression, the wars, and through the

turmoil of changes to the health system during the past many years.

Addressing health care needs in the 1990s and into the new millennium has necessitated some major changes to our present system. Change is a difficult process, but true to form, the Sisters of St Joe's have been a catalyst to this change and have been active participants in restructuring the Peterborough hospitals.

Generations of families such as my own have memories of St Joe's Hospital, sometimes traumatic, of illness and death, and of course the happy memories of birth. One thing remained constant: the help and healing power of these wonderful nuns.

At this time, I want to express the appreciation of the province of Ontario to the Sisters of St Joseph, Peterborough, for their contribution to many years of excellent —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I am pleased to update members of the Legislature today on the status of our welfare reforms. Ontario's improving economy and our welfare reforms are producing results. Last month we experienced the single largest monthly drop in the welfare caseload in two years. That is indeed good news.

Almost 20,000 people stopped relying on welfare in September alone. I think this is especially significant this week, during Family Week, to know that so many families and their children are no longer trapped in the welfare system. In fact, since this government was elected, more than 323,000 people have stopped relying on welfare and over 133,000 fewer children are now trapped on welfare than before.

This government is committed to helping children and families in a variety of ways and our reform of the welfare system is just one way we are accomplishing our goal. Under Ontario Works, our mandatory workfare program, single parents with school-aged children are now required to participate in activities designed to help them get back to work because we know, and the experts will tell you and families will tell you, that they are better off if one or both of their parents are in the workforce.

To support their efforts, we have increased funding from \$30 million to \$40 million for Ontario Works participants who require assistance with child care. This year the government is spending up to \$700 million on child care services. We are helping the parents of over 73,000 children with the cost of their child care fees through subsidies. In fact, the Ontario child care system is now serving more children than ever before. Since this

government took office, there are over 180 more child care centres and over 14,500 new child care spaces.

This spring, we also announced LEAP, Learning, Earning and Parenting, that will provide \$25 million in child care subsidies and other supports to help single parents on welfare to finish school. We want single parents to have the same opportunities as others in Ontario Works. We want them to gain the skills they need to find and keep a job.

As members already know, Ontario Works has been up and running across the province for some time now. Already, more than 427,000 people have participated in one or more of the program's mandatory activities. People on welfare have told us that Ontario Works is making a difference in their lives. It is helping them to develop skills, make contact with potential employers and give something back to their communities.

We know that the majority of people leaving welfare are doing so for jobs. Two successive independent surveys have found that roughly 60% left welfare for job-related reasons. We also know that the majority of them left for full-time jobs at much more than minimum wage.

In short, the people in Ontario want to work and Ontario Works is helping them to do that.

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Over the last summer, in all the travels that we did on Bill 22, what we discovered was that so-called workfare is the biggest hoax the Ontario government has played on the people of the province.

The unfortunate thing is that here in the House we'll never hear the minister repeat what we found proof of out in the field across Ontario, whether we were in Cornwall or Chatham or London or Toronto, that 97% of all welfare recipients are not on workfare. After three years of Mike Harris in Ontario, after he promised to deliver, so called, "making people work for their benefits," 97% of all welfare recipients are in the programs that existed before this government took office. We know that is proven today. We have said it all along, that what people on assistance need are real opportunities to gain training and education opportunities for the workforce. This independent survey quoted today indicates that a minimum of 60% are finding employment out there. That's why they're leaving the system. It has nothing to do with so-called welfare reform by the Mike Harris government.

1350

I will tell you that Bill 22, the Sleeping Beauty bill — because when it came to committee, the one MPP at committee fell asleep at the switch causing an entire new bill and debate in the Legislature, over seven hours' worth at \$100,000 an hour of taxpayers' money, so quoted by the member from Scarborough, and that at taxpayers' expense. We ask the question: How many people could have gained through training and education with the \$700,000 that was wasted because the government was forced to introduce the Sleeping Beauty bill?

What that bill allowed us to do was to travel Ontario to find out that in fact 97% of all recipients have nothing to do with the workfare program. Where new programs were

introduced in Ontario, those programs are voluntary. Let me repeat: Where there are programs that are new in Ontario, those programs are voluntary.

In the minister's own riding of Durham, she went begging to the union officials there, "Please, let's make a deal, I would be prepared to settle for a voluntary program," so that she could politically stand up and say that a program, any program, was up and running in her own riding. This of course is the way it is right across Ontario — voluntary programs, not mandatory, making people work for their benefits.

We ask the question: You chose to write your policy on social reform on the back of a napkin for the last election. When it came time to have to implement real social policy that works for the people of Ontario, many of them were colleagues in the workforce until the downturn, who now were forced on to social assistance, people who could have been on the line at Chrysler or Ford but couldn't work and now found themselves on assistance. Those are the people you chose to identify as those people you're going to make work for their benefits. We expect more from this government in terms of social reform. We expect real opportunities for training and education.

I ask the minister to review why September was such a good month for that ministry, because that's when school starts. This same ministry kicked students off the social reform rolls and put them on a loan program, and that is the largest accounting of the change in numbers that she chooses to advance today.

The statements that come from estimates will prove that the transfers from the Comsoc ministry were the students who were booted off the system. That is the number one issue that student administrators at colleges and universities across Ontario are dealing with today, the fact that students who are trying to help themselves to be re-educated, retrained, get off the rolls, are not finding the kind of support so that they can pay their bills and finish their education.

What that means for people who are trying to help themselves is that they will find at the end of the day an enormous debt load with no ability to pay that debt. When that gets assumed by the government, the government will have paid twice for them. That simply is foolish social policy. We expect the government to do better than that.

Interjections: Five, four, three, two, one.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): You know what? I don't want to hear that next time, any countdown of the clock. It's not parliamentary; it just shows bad form. I suggest to the members over there in the back row doing it not to do it again. Thank you.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Once again we're seeing the government trying to spin some numbers about social assistance. However, when we look at what's really happening, in fact these numbers are completely phony.

There is a very serious problem here. I note that the minister doesn't care to hear about that problem. That's probably very indicative of where this government really stands. The fact of the matter is that poverty in Ontario is

on the increase. Poverty isn't going down, poverty is going up, and child poverty is going up rapidly. The use of food banks is going up.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. There are a lot of meetings taking place. There's a din in the room. I would ask the members to come to order. We're at part of ministry statements right as we speak. It's up to the minister to make the statement and the opposition parties to respond. I think we owe the courtesy to all members that if you're going to have a meeting, can you take it outside into the lobbies, please.

Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I think this is indicative of this government's attitude towards child poverty. This government prefers to spin it as a story and tries to ignore the real issues.

The fact of the matter is that poverty is increasing in Ontario. The fact of the matter is that child poverty is increasing dramatically. The fact of the matter is that the number of people who are forced to use food banks to get something to eat on the table is increasing dramatically. The fact of the matter is that there are more homeless people in Ontario today.

What I hoped we would hear from the minister would be a strategy to deal with child hunger, a strategy to deal with child poverty, a strategy to deal with homelessness. No, this government and this minister want to ignore the reality of what's happening out there and they try to spin some numbers saying that their workfare program is a success.

Let's look at what is really happening. The fact of the matter is that a whole lot of people have been transferred to the new Ontario disability support program. The fact of the matter is that the government is using that transfer to the Ontario disability support program and trying to say that people have come off social assistance. The fact of the matter is that this government has now eliminated social assistance for students who are trying to go back to college or university, trying to get the skills they need to take part in the economy. How is the government trying to spin that? They're trying to say these people have come off social assistance and have found work. No, they haven't. You simply said to them that they don't matter, they don't count.

You have come here today and inflated the numbers and tried to tell people that the number of people living in poverty is down, that the number of children living in poverty is down, that the number of people who are homeless is down, that the number of people who have to rely on food banks is down, that the number of students who need some help if they're going to get back into the workforce is down. No, none of those is down. They are all up. There's a poverty problem, there's a child poverty problem, there's a hunger problem, there's a homelessness problem, and your government doesn't care.

If you want further evidence about how phony this is, simply look at the job numbers. Since April, Ontario has lost 22,000 jobs; 22,000 jobs have been lost in this

province. That's Statistics Canada. I know this government doesn't want to listen to Statistics Canada. They would prefer to spin more of their propaganda advertising and prefer to believe that that is somehow more true than Statistics Canada studies. The fact of the matter is that Statistics Canada notes that this province has lost 22,000 jobs since April. That is the reality. So don't try to tell us that workfare is taking people and helping them to find jobs. The jobs are disappearing.

What you're doing is forcing people who are poor out in the street, into homelessness. You're forcing them into food banks. You're forcing them into situations where they and their children more and more live in poverty. Meanwhile, you're taking \$5.5 billion, money out of health care, money out of education, money out of communities and you're going to give the wealthiest people in this province an income tax gift.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): This is redistribution, all right.

Mr Hampton: This is redistribution. You punish people who are poor, you punish children, you punish students who are trying to get the skills to get into the workforce. You punish all of them and then you reward the 6% or 7% who are at the top of the income ladder. That is the true Conservative agenda. That is what is really happening in Ontario today as a result of your government.

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Last night in the debate over Bill 55, the member for Simcoe Centre indicated in his comments that there will be public hearings on that piece of legislation. I'm seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow the Minister of Education to stand in his place, clarify —

The Speaker: You know what —

Mr Caplan: I have the Hansard record.

The Speaker: I understand that, but I don't think the member for Simcoe Centre is even here.

Mr Caplan: I have the Hansard.

The Speaker: You may well have the Hansard, but the member is not here, and I don't really want to go anyplace looking for unanimous consent when we're quoting a member who isn't even in the Legislative Assembly. I think it's improper.

Interjection: It's not improper.

The Speaker: I'm not debating it.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. I appreciate the help. Thank you. I appreciate that, member for Oriole, and maybe you'll want to bring it up when the member comes into the room, but at this point in time I don't want to seek unanimous consent for that. If you want to seek it on a different ground, that's fine, but the member for Simcoe Centre isn't even in the assembly.

Mr Caplan: If I could just clarify —

The Speaker: New point of order, member for Oriole.

Mr Caplan: — the unanimous consent that I'm seeking is to the Minister of Education and Training to stand in his place today and confirm that there will indeed be public hearings on Bill 55.

The Speaker: You don't need unanimous consent to ask the Minister of Education to confirm something. That sounds like a question, so it would be properly used during question period. I think that's more appropriate. You're asking him to confirm something and that's a question.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I appreciate that. I understand what you're saying, but I think it's a question rather than unanimous consent.

SECURITY OF LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: There have been some changes — I want to preambule this by saying this is not a criticism or a complaint at all, just an explanation — that have taken place in security that many staff are asking about, and the public. That emanates from a committee, does it, of members of the Legislature?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Yes.

Mr Bradley: Could you say a couple of words about that? We're getting a lot of questions about it. There have been some changes that it is felt are necessary in this House for the building —

The Speaker: I don't know if this is probably the most appropriate time, but I know the committee is going to meet in the very near future. I think the meeting is being organized as we speak. I know there are members from each caucus on the committee, and I'll be happy to invite maybe the House leaders from each caucus to come if they want to and hear about the changes that have been approved.

Let me just say quickly that it's all part of the program that was adopted by this Legislature in their report. If you want a copy of the report, phone my office. But with respect to your point of order, I'll be happy to organize a meeting so I can bring the House up to speed.

DEFERRED VOTES

INSTRUCTION TIME:

MINIMUM STANDARDS ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998

SUR LES HEURES D'ENSEIGNEMENT : NORMES MINIMALES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 63, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to instructional time / Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne les heures d'enseignement.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Call in the members; it will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1403 to 1408.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the bill, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bassett, Isabel
Beaubien, Marcel
Boushy, Dave
Brown, Jim
Carr, Gary
Carroll, Jack
Chudleigh, Ted
Clement, Tony
Cunningham, Dianne
Doyle, Ed
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Eves, Ernie L.
Fisher, Barbara
Flaherty, Jim
Ford, Douglas B.
Fox, Gary
Froese, Tom
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Grimmett, Bill

Guzzo, Garry J.
Hardeman, Ernie
Harnick, Charles
Hastings, John
Hodgson, Chris
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Johnson, David
Jordan, W. Leo
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Leach, Al
Leadston, Gary L.
Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
McLean, Allan K.
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Palladini, Al
Parker, John L.
Pettit, Trevor
Preston, Peter
Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Saunderson, William
Shea, Derwyn
Sheehan, Frank
Skarica, Toni
Smith, Bruce
Snobelen, John
Spina, Joseph
Stewart, R. Gary
Tilson, David
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Vankoughnet, Bill
Villeneuve, Noble
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, Terence H.

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Boyd, Marion
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Caplan, David
Castrilli, Annamarie
Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.
Colle, Mike
Conway, Sean G.
Crozier, Bruce
Cullen, Alex

Curling, Alvin
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hampton, Howard
Hoy, Pat
Kennedy, Gerard
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Lankin, Frances
Lessard, Wayne
Marchese, Rosario
Martin, Tony
McLeod, Lyn
Morin, Gilles E.
Patten, Richard
Phillips, Gerry
Pouliot, Gilles
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Siipio, Tony
Wildman, Bud
Wood, Len

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 71; the nays are 37.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question today for the Minister of Health. I want to talk to you about your mismanagement of hospitals, about the way you've cut and slashed hospital budgets, you've ordered closures and mergers, and through all of this you've tried to dodge responsibility.

Minister, today I want to talk to you about a specific situation at the Sunnybrook and Women's College Hospital. That's a shotgun marriage that you arranged. I want to talk to you specifically, Minister, about Tom Closson, the former CEO of Sunnybrook hospital.

Over the summertime the board of the former Sunnybrook hospital changed a provision in Mr Closson's contract. That change gave him the same amount of money if he decided to quit as he would have had, had he been fired. This meant that when Mr Closson did decide to resign in July, he was eligible to receive some \$450,000 of public money.

Minister, what I want to know from you today is, were you aware of this arrangement and do you approve?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): As the member opposite knows, hospitals in this province are autonomous corporations and they are run by boards of directors. These are issues that are dealt with. They are internal matters of the hospital.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, by now the public of Ontario is used to your shrug on anything to do with health care. We're talking about public dollars, taxpayer dollars, some \$450,000 that went to Mr Closson who's making \$319,000 a year and, by the way, is making a similar amount now in a health care organization in British Columbia. He left Sunnybrook, before any competition had been held, of his own choice.

Minister, you're the one who cut \$27.5 million from Sunnybrook and Women's budget. You forced the merger of these organizations. Did you not set the rules for what happens when these events take place?

Minister, you're causing 35 hospitals to shut down and that could be at least 35 more executive contracts with big payouts that will be taking place. In this case this person chose to leave, so that could be many more executives collecting these kinds of contracts.

Minister, have you not acted to protect the public interest? Do you not have guidelines for this? Do you have copies of the executive contracts that contain these kinds of provisions? If you do will you table —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister.

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I indicated, this is a hospital that does have a board of governors. It is an autonomous corporation. I'm very proud of the fact that our government passed the law that made it a prerequisite that in all agencies that accepted public money, the names of those individuals earning over \$100,000 would be disclosed. Obviously this is an issue that the public now has an opportunity to be aware of and it's an issue for the board of directors to deal with.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, I think it's a sad commentary on the state of management of health care in this province that you weren't aware of it and you didn't do anything about it.

Your cuts have caused the firing of thousands of nurses in this province. At Sunnybrook alone, the Ontario Nurses' Association tells us that 227,000 hours of nursing time has gone because of nurses who have been fired.

Minister, \$450,000 buys a lot of nursing time, and we're sad to see that you're not interested in it. You talk about rules for disclosure over \$100,000, but your government isn't prepared to do anything about the money that's going into these executive contracts. You've tried to

blame administrators in the past, but now you've set up a situation where administrators are making more money by leaving hospitals than by staying there and doing a good job.

Will you agree to establish guidelines, and will you also stand up in this House today and apologize for not having taken the steps to limit the waste and to protect patients during the closings and the mergers that you caused in the first place?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I am very proud to stand in my place and acknowledge the fact that this government has demonstrated more concern and done more for nurses than any previous government. In fact, let me quote from Barb Wahl, the president of the Ontario Nurses' Association, who described our nursing task force, which is taking a look at the issue of nursing supply and the quality of work for nurses in this province, when she said, "This is a very significant first step in addressing crucial nursing issues in Ontario."

As I say, our government has listened, our government is responding to nurses, and our government will ensure that nurses have a quality of life and working conditions that we can all be proud of.

The Speaker: New question, official opposition.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It was our understanding that the Minister of the Environment was scheduled to be here at 2:15. Are you aware of whether he is here or not? Can you be of any assistance?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Okay, apparently — I know the job — he's supposed to be here, so we'll stand down your question.

You're not standing it down? Okay. Member for York South.

AIR QUALITY

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I'll direct this question to the Minister of Health. Minister, today your government got a wake-up call from two sources. Two studies confirmed the pitiful state of the environment here in Ontario, but they did more than that. They talked about the linkages to the problems that people are experiencing in health. The Suzuki foundation and the NAFTA environmental agency both told us that we have hospital admissions and 6,000 deaths a year attributable to pollution that is unchecked and uncontrolled under your government.

On the 19th and 20th of this month there is a joint ministers' meeting addressing Canada's response to the environment, and it's imperative that health ministers be there. We assume you're going to be there, Minister, protecting Ontarians. What we want to know is, what is the plan that you'll be bringing to Halifax to ensure that the environment doesn't inflict more damage on the health of Ontarians?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I understand that certainly this morning the minister was

involved in dialogue on this issue. Unfortunately, he's not here to respond, but I can certainly tell you on behalf of the minister that this government is very committed to protecting and improving Ontario's air quality. They are doing everything at the ministry, in conjunction with the stakeholders, in order that they can very aggressively tackle the problem of air quality issues.

We also appreciate the leadership that has been taken by the Suzuki foundation in bringing forward to the public's attention, because we think that is very important, the health effects of air pollution and climate change.

Certainly Ontario will continue to work with the federal government and we will continue to work with provincial governments in order that we can reach our goals as quickly as possible.

1420

Mr Kennedy: Minister, we wanted you to do more than read the environment minister's notes; we wanted you to get the point. The point is that the bad environment under your government is creating health problems in Ontario. People across the province, children with asthma — some 20% of the admissions that are taking place for young children with breathing problems come because of pollution, this report tells us. They tell us that for every death there's a hospital admission, and for every hospital admission there are hundreds of hours of lost productive time.

As the Minister of Health, are you going to Halifax? Are you taking notice of this problem and the health of Ontarians? Have you done anything up to now to prepare us for the impact on people's health? Do you acknowledge that you, as the Minister of Health, have a role to play here in protecting Ontarians from the ravages of the sulphur you put in the air, the lack of environmental protection taking place? Will you go to Halifax and will you go there with a plan that you'll tell us about today?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I will refer this to the Minister of the Environment.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): The meeting in Halifax is a meeting of ministers of energy and environment to deal with all the issues the member of the opposition talked about.

One of the things Ontario did in the last meeting and will be doing in this meeting is ensuring that, when we're talking about Kyoto and the global warming concept, a sector table be set up which will include health care professionals. In the last meeting we encouraged ministers from across Canada to include a whole number of sectors. I believe very strongly after my meeting with Dr Suzuki this morning that a health care sector table is very important. I believe I can put that particular idea forward on behalf of the Minister of Health at that meeting.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Final supplementary.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm not sure what is more appalling, the lack of interest and concern by the Minister of Health or the total incompetence of the Minister of the Environment. Clearly this is the worst tag

team in the history of the province and this country in dealing with death and environmental problems. It is disgraceful.

Minister, you don't get it. Some 6,000 Ontarians die prematurely every single year due to your incompetence, your lack of action, and you sit there and smugly talk about a plan for what to do in the future. Kids who have asthma end up in hospitals much more in Ontario than anywhere else across Canada. You don't seem to get it. You have cut the budget, you have cut environment, you've abandoned standards, and you sit there and talk about, "Well, we're working together." It's garbage. Nobody believes you. You have no credibility left. That's why we were hoping the Minister of Health would have more guts and courage than you to take on the issue, but she has proven to be simply as irresponsible as you in dealing with environmental problems.

Very simply, this is a crisis. We have an emergency situation. Will you today commit to convene an emergency meeting of health and environmental experts in Ontario to draw up a plan to immediately deal with this crisis that you and your ministry have caused?

Hon Mr Sterling: This government has shown more concern over air quality issues than any government in Ontario. As you know, we are in the throes of implementing perhaps the largest clean air program in this province that has ever been seen.

The Drive Clean program that I talked about in terms of dealing with vehicle emissions testing is going to be the largest program affecting the most citizens of Ontario that has ever been done. This program will be starting on January 1 of next year, a tremendous program —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, I'm warning you, and the members for Oakwood and Ottawa West as well.

Hon Mr Sterling: It's unfortunate that members opposite do not look at the very positive things this government has done with regard to air quality in this province. We have done so many things with regard to this particular issue, and we are known quite frankly as leaders across this country with regard to this particular issue and we will continue to be so.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Attorney General. For the fourth time in a week I'm going to ask the Attorney General about the escalating problem of violence against women and about your government's failure to take this issue seriously and your failure to do anything about it.

On Monday you confirmed that where women appear in family court without a lawyer, because they can't afford a lawyer, they have to serve their own court documents on their former abusive partners.

Last Thursday, October 1, on one of the days when we raised this issue and it was ignored by your government, a woman was forced to do this very thing. She was forced to

serve court documents on her former abusive husband. In the process of doing that, he ran her down with a car, deliberately. She suffered injuries to her shoulders and a broken wrist.

Minister, when are you going to take this issue seriously? When are you going to change your policy and instruct the courts to serve these documents?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As I indicated the other day, and unfortunately I can't respond to the particulars of what the member has related, there are a number of ways that documents can be served, including by mail.

I have certainly advised the court services people to make known those various options, which include private process serving, mail and also, if there is no other way, the use of court process servers for this limited purpose. I have indicated that's a message that should be reinforced. I know that is the directive that has gone out to the different offices around the province, and I will again check and confirm that is the case. We want all of those options to be available.

Mr Hampton: This is a pitiful response. You know that it is your government that cut the budgets of many of our court offices so that they cannot serve these court documents or they can only serve them in very limited circumstances. You know that more and more women are appearing in court, the victims of abuse. They cannot afford their own lawyer. Your cuts to legal aid mean that they can't get a legal aid lawyer. So they appear in court unrepresented and they basically get shuffled out of the court because of what your government has done. They're told, "Go serve these documents on your former abusive spouse, your former abusive husband, your former abusive partner." You know that's what's happening out there, yet you refuse to do anything about it.

Minister, how many more women have to be placed in these kinds of very risky situations by your government? How many more women have to be hurt before you'll change your policy and do the right thing?

Hon Mr Harnick: I don't believe that any more women have to be put in this position, because the alternatives for service exist so that they can in fact provide the service of documents without the need to do that themselves.

As I've indicated to the member, I will again ensure that the directive I have been told has been sent to every court office has in fact been sent to every court office; that private process servers can be made available for the purpose of serving these documents; that if that is not viable, the alternative of service by mail be reinforced; and that if there is no other way the documents can be served, the court office will arrange for service of those documents. That will be something I will again reinforce with court offices around the province.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Final supplementary.

1430

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Minister, that's not good enough. Just change the directive today. The

judge told this woman your rules. He did not tell her she had options.

Minister, I hope this situation frightens you as much as it frightens me. Let me remind you that eight more women have died since those jury recommendations came forward. This woman, who was hit by the car deliberately, could have been another victim, and this time directly because of the cuts you made.

On Monday you said you had the implementation committee up and running. We know that no committee has been formed. Yesterday you said you were getting it underway. The experts, who spent every day, 51 days, at those hearings, are here today: Eileen Morrow, from the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, and Fiona Sampson, from the Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children, are here in the gallery. They are the ones who know the issues. Your bureaucrats don't know the issues.

Would you go out there today after question period, sit down with them and invite them to sit with you and form this implementation committee today?

Hon Mr Harnick: My understanding is that on Monday meetings were taking place with a representative of Metrac, Marilou McPhedran, to talk about these issues. My understanding is that there are meetings arranged with Ms Morrow for I believe sometime next week. That's what I've been informed. I was advised of a date for such a meeting and certainly if it hasn't yet been arranged, I know it is in the course of being arranged.

I can tell the member that we have done a significant amount of the initial implementation of recommendations as a result of the May-Iles inquest. One of those is to develop this committee process, and that is in the course of being done. Meetings are taking place and we intend to comply with the recommendations that have been made.

Ms Churley: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to ask the Attorney General to table here today the documents that —

The Speaker: That's not a point of order. New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I would like the Attorney General to table the documents here today.

My next question is for the Minister of —

The Speaker: Leader of the third party, that's not a point of order either.

CURRICULUM

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Minister of Education, you will remember —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'd like to know who your question was to.

Mr Hampton: To the Minister of Education. You will remember that many of us were very shocked when you indicated that you were going to contract out the development of Ontario's new secondary school curriculum, that teachers who are actually in the classroom would not be developing it. You tried to mollify us and say, "Don't worry, teachers who are in the classroom will be

involved." We were worried that many important curriculum issues would be left out in this new contracting out of curriculum. You said, "Don't worry, it'll be OK."

Minister, can you tell us why, then, you have directed the curriculum project managers to change the grade 9 and 10 curriculum policy documents by deleting "education about discrimination and anti-discrimination," deleting "education about native people," and deleting "education about violence prevention"? Why have you instructed that these things should be deleted from the curriculum?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I made no such instruction.

Mr Hampton: I'm amazed that this government wants to control everything, but then when they get caught at it, they say, "It wasn't us." This is a Ministry of Education and Training memorandum to project managers of curriculum from Karen Allan regarding program planning. It says:

"Part 1: Delete cross-curricular considerations" — education with respect to anti-racism; education with respect to anti-discrimination — "delete violence prevention; delete education about native people."

Why would one of your officials be sending out this kind of directive to the people who are working on the curriculum? Minister, don't you think these things are important in our high school curriculum? Don't you think these things ought to be addressed? The last time I checked, this city is one of the most multicultural cities in the world. The last time I checked, some of these issues are very serious. Why are you deleting them?

Hon David Johnson: The curriculum is being developed by teams of teachers. At least half of the composition of the teams has to be teachers from Ontario, a representative from the college, a representative from the university, a representative from the workplace. These highly trained, highly experienced teams are consulting with people across Ontario, making various drafts, and based on various inputs they have at various points in time, they will make changes to the curriculum as they deem suitable. Certainly the kinds of issues that the opposition member has raised are important issues, and I can only conclude that the experienced teams such as have been involved would have those topics suitably incorporated into the curriculum.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you can try to spin a good line. This is the reality of your government: You disbanded the anti-discrimination and equal opportunity branch soon after you became the government, you held back the release of an anti-hate guidebook for teachers and principals that was drafted for you by B'Nai Brith, then you send out this September 14 memo saying that all these other things are going to be deleted from the curriculum. Now you're trying to say it will somehow be added on.

These are important issues. You don't sort of add them on to the curriculum. They aren't extras that you put in at the end. These are issues that have to be integrated into the classroom on a daily basis by teachers. They have to be part of the curriculum if that's going to happen. Why

have you done this, Minister? Why did you not release the booklet from B'Nai Brith? Why have you deleted education on anti-discrimination? Why have you deleted from the curriculum the issues dealing with anti-violence? Why are you taking all of these important issues out of the curriculum? Don't they matter in Conservative Ontario?

Hon David Johnson: This makes for wonderful spin in the House, but the member opposite knows full well I have deleted nothing.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): That is your ministry memo.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Algoma, come to order.

Hon David Johnson: I have confidence in the teachers. Maybe the leader of the third party has no confidence in the teachers of the province; maybe the leader of the third party has no confidence in the university representative and the college representative. Obviously from his questions, he doesn't have any confidence in the teachers who are developing the secondary school curriculum, but I have that confidence.

I know that those teachers and those university and college representatives forming the teams to develop the secondary school curriculum are going to come forward with the best possible product for secondary school students in Ontario. I have that confidence, and I know they're going to come forward with it, regardless of the innuendoes of the leader of the third party.

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): My question is to the Deputy Premier, and it's a matter of great concern to me. As you know, many Ontarians feel shut out by this government: the poor, nurses, teachers and many other groups as well. I have before me a news update issued by the Cornerstone Club, which I understand is a Conservative Party, \$500 membership, organization. It talks here about membership privileges. It says that a day of workshops with ministers and policy staff will be initiated prior to the annual reception with the Premier for an extra \$325.

What I'm really concerned about is the last line of this memo. It states as follows: "The important addition here is the day of workshops with ministers and policy staff prior to the annual meeting. This will give everyone an opportunity to participate in decisions."

Will you tell me, Minister, is it the policy of this government that you can buy decisions from the government on the payment of \$325?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): The answer is absolutely not. I know nothing about the news update that you speak of from the Cornerstone Club and I'm not participating in any such discussions.

Mr Gerretsen: I'll send over a copy of the news update to you. If you admit that it's wrong, will you shut it down immediately? Will you make it clear to the people of Ontario that neither this government nor any government

is for sale, that meetings with ministers and policy staff to participate in decisions is wrong and that you're going to shut it down right away and send out another memo clarifying your position in this matter?

Hon Mr Eves: There is no inference to my knowledge that says you can buy policy. We happen to live in a free province in a free country where all members of society are encouraged to give their points of view to the government of the day, and to the opposition members for that matter.

1440

AIR QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. This is a bad day for you, and for the federal Liberal government in Ottawa as well. Today David Suzuki came to Ontario with a message for the Ontario government and the federal Liberal government. His message was for you and the health minister, who I might add didn't even bother to attend the meeting. His message is this: that 6,000 people die prematurely in Ontario every year from the effects of air pollution. You use the number 1,800; it's much more than that. Both you and the federal Liberal government have cut environmental funding. You've destroyed government's ability to enforce what regulations do exist and to monitor corporate polluters. You've ignored our calls for action for three years. Will you listen to David Suzuki's very credible report today and take action?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I was glad to be joined by Tim Hudak, the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Health, to meet with Dr Suzuki this morning. Dr Suzuki and I agreed on very many points and we found a lot of common ground with regard to our goals with regard to reducing the pollution in the air we have in Ontario.

As I've mentioned before, we've done many things in this province to deal with air quality problems. The most recent one, as I mentioned previously, is our Drive Clean program. We have lowered the gas volatility in gasoline during the summer period of time to improve our air quality here. We have a smog rover. We have a smog patrol. We have a whole plethora of initiatives we've taken in air quality and we are continuing to work on this with groups like David Suzuki's.

Ms Churley: Your Drive Clean program is a joke. You have no timetables. You're behind schedule and now we find out that you'll be testing light vehicles first and not the heavy duty vehicles, which as you know are the biggest polluters. In fact, no timelines are provided at all for the testing of heavy duty vehicles, so don't give me that nonsense any more.

You know that every year we've had bad air days. We've had 12 bad air days this year and it will increase again next year. You know that it affects infants and elderly people most. You are holding the children of this province ransom to a future they aren't responsible for.

Don't stand there and tell me you're doing something about it.

What I want to ask you, Minister, is this: I want to know if you accept the results of this study completely, and are you prepared to accept any of the recommendations in this document?

Hon Mr Sterling: I'd like to thank the member opposite because this is an issue, as you know, which has occupied a great deal of my ministry's time.

On January 1, we will have the first car tested in the province with regard to the vehicle emissions testing program. After that we'll have over 120,000 cars each and every month tested in this province to deal with the air pollution problems they might encounter. I think that's a significant improvement here.

I have only received the report, but I have looked at some of the recommendations. In fact, we are in full support of many of the recommendations in Dr Suzuki's report and are working to embrace even more. They require legislation; they require policy shifts. We will be working with groups like Dr Suzuki's to improve even a better system for our environment, and we believe we've improved it a great deal already.

HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): My question today is for the Minister of Health. Despite the unconscionable \$2-billion cut in health care from the federal Liberal government, this government is spending an unprecedented amount of money in health care, and this is translating into more services for Ontario families.

In my riding of Guelph, a number of citizens are very concerned about preventive programs. There's an old saying, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." I'm wondering if you could please tell us, Minister, what programs the Ministry of Health is undertaking along the line of good health and prevention strategies.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Let me say that certainly we are very much focusing on wellness, on health promotion, and on early intervention and prevention.

One of the programs that we have undertaken, because we are seeing an increase in diabetes, is a diabetes prevention strategy in order that we can identify the health risk to people as early as possible.

We're also moving forward with a tobacco strategy.

We also, as you know, introduced a healthy heart program. It's a \$17-million commitment over five years which we believe will certainly have an impact on reducing the number of cardiac procedures that are required, if people simply undertake a few steps.

We have the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children initiative, which again focuses on screening all children at birth, and we have the preschool speech and language program, which deals with preschoolers in order that they can get the best start in life possible.

Mrs Elliott: I know that in my riding particularly they were very pleased to see the preschool speech and language program being undertaken.

My supplementary to you is, do you have ways of determining in the ministry how effective these prevention programs are, and are we in fact seeing good results from these programs being implemented?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Yes, I recently had an opportunity to go to the preschool speech and language program at the Rotary Centre in Waterloo, and one of the good, I guess, results of what we have done is that we did allow, under the preschool speech and language program, parents to identify their children. As a result, we're seeing the rate of identification for children who have speech and language difficulties increasing almost twofold, which means that those children who are now identified are going to have the opportunity to get the necessary support that will enhance their self-esteem. As a result of the program, there are going to be fewer learning difficulties later in life, fewer health problems. We expect that by the year 2002 there are going to be at least 75,000 children who will have benefited from the services that are being provided.

If we take a look at the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: — where the plan is to screen all children at birth, we anticipate that again there will be about 150,000 newborns screened each year, and if there are problems —

The Speaker: New question.

1450

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Minister of Education. I have here a copy of a letter to you from the chair of the special education advisory committee of the Peterborough, Victoria, Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board.

This is a board that went through all the right steps in submitting to your ministry the applications for funding for their special needs students. They received confirmation that 97% of their applicants were approved. The board was told by your ministry that they were to receive \$4.6 million in funding. They have now been told that they will get only \$2.5 million, less than 50% of that, this year. The chair of the special advisory committee called this a crisis for the special-needs students in their board.

Minister, you promised in your funding formula to provide funding for every student with special needs who met your criteria for funding. Will you today provide the funding that you promised to these special-needs students?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): Clearly, we'll provide the support we promised. What we promised was over \$1 billion. This government, for the first time in the history of Ontario, has not only provided a huge amount of money, over \$1 billion, in special education across the province, but we have

protected that money so that the monies cannot be used — as they have been in the past, unfortunately, in some circumstances — for other purposes. The money must be used for special education. Those monies, by the way, are flowing to the school boards. They're already flowing to the school boards.

There is another process taking place as well, even with the \$1 billion, to ensure that each and every special-needs student gets the kind of services they've had in the past: an independent audit taking place which is nearing completion. Those monies will flow to each and every board across the province of Ontario.

Mrs McLeod: No. You put out the funding formula. You said you would provide funding for the special-needs students who met the criteria you set out; 97% of the applications from this board met the criteria. Your ministry said they would get \$4.6 million because that's what you said they needed for their special-needs kids, and then you cut it in half.

Minister, special-needs kids can't wait while you keep your promises over the course of the next two years. They are not the only —

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): — 4% cap. That is so misleading.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister, you must withdraw that comment.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I withdraw.

The Speaker: Member for Fort William.

Mrs McLeod: If the minister thinks I'm misleading, I invite him to read the letter from his own board.

I also tell the Minister of Education that this is not the only board affected. The London Catholic board of education was denied \$500,000 of the money which should have gone to them for their special-needs children under your funding formula. They are also considered to be victims of your failure to keep your promise.

Minister, I ask you today, will you provide the money you promised to these special-needs children, or will you personally go to Peterborough and decide which 50% of those kids go to school this year and which half stay home?

Hon David Johnson: There's no difficulty with that at all. We will provide the money we promised. We promised over \$1 billion. We have promised an audit, that if the \$1 billion didn't cover all the needs in the intensive support amounts, didn't provide for all the needs of the children who've received support in the past, this independent audit would uncover that. Indeed, we're in the last stages of that. But the initial amount of money, the \$1 billion, is flowing to each and every board across the province. We've guaranteed those monies to the boards and those monies will come.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Solicitor General. It's about the Harris government's policy on 12-year-olds and guns. I've listened

to all of your attempts to deflect this issue and to blame the federal government. It doesn't wash. Let me tell you why.

It's clearly on the record that the federal minors' permit policy was intended to be by exception. Prior to your changes, it was administered that way in Ontario. OPP Sergeant Bill Hocking confirmed, in a CP article, that despite the federal policy that you point to, police in Ontario do not in practice issue permits to children younger than 15. The reason for that is that there are no legitimate reasons to issue permits to children younger than 15 because they were not legally allowed to hunt. By making hunting licences available to 12-to-15-year-olds, you, not the feds, are making gun permits available to 12-to-15-year-olds; you, not the feds, are putting guns in the hands of 12-year-olds. Why, Minister?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I will refer the question to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I'm pleased to stand in the House today and explain the hunter apprenticeship program to the member opposite, because clearly you must be misinformed on this program.

In this program, we specifically do not allow the apprentice in the hunting activity to use their own weapon; in fact, they have to use a weapon that they would share with a licensed adult hunter. They can do so only with the permission of their parents, and they can do so only after they have completed about 25 hours of training, so as to be able to enter the sport in a safe manner, understanding the ethics and safe practices of hunting.

Ms Lankin: Telling me that they're going to be out there with another teenager supervising them doesn't make me or any other Ontarian feel any better. The lineup of Ontarians who oppose this policy is growing. Let me give you the latest name to add to that chorus of opposition: the chief of police of North Bay, the Premier's home town. Chief Ron Nagle says 12-year-olds are still children, they just aren't responsible enough to be shooting guns. Let me quote Mr Nagle. "All it takes, in my view, is one moment of inattention and you can have a tragedy that people will live with for the rest of their lives, and I certainly am not in favour of the changes at this time."

Ontarians don't agree with this policy. Let me give you the results of an Oracle Research poll in Sudbury. Some 94% were opposed to allowing 12-year-olds to have guns to hunt. Even with all of your padding of training and supervision, 67% opposed your new policy.

Minister, Ontarians don't want their government to let children hunt with guns. Will you please do the right thing and reverse this dangerous and downright stupid policy of the Harris government?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Again, I'm pleased to address the member opposite. I think there may be some misunderstanding on the member's part of what's included in this program, because clearly from her comments today she doesn't understand the hunter apprenticeship program.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Minister.

Hon Mr Snobelen: Again, it's a pleasure to stand here and inform the member opposite, who clearly does not understand this program, because this program is about tough safety standards, it's about education, it's about making sure that Ontario has some of the toughest standards of education in the country for people who are engaging in the sport of hunting. We're proud of those regulations.

If the member opposite has a problem with a young person holding a firearms licence, then the member opposite should address the federal government, because that's where those standards are set.

1500

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): My question is for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. The federal government has negotiated a labour marketing agreement with every other province in Canada, that's every province but Ontario. In this province, we need an employment and training plan that meets the economic and job realities of the 21st century and will better serve the needs of employers, workers and those seeking work. Minister, when can we in Ontario expect that maybe we might have an agreement with the federal government?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): I'd like to thank the member for Kitchener for his question. He's correct. We all know that Ontario does need a federal-provincial agreement to end the duplication and overlap that currently exist in our training and job preparation system, a system that is basically parallel between Ottawa and Ontario. We can do better and we can work together.

Last evening in this House the member for Fort William stood up and stated, "I'll look forward to the day when the parliamentary secretary to education gets up and explains why Ontario is the only province that doesn't have a training agreement with the federal government." I think the member should know that the federal government in fact has been stalling. They're stalling in the effort to come to the table to make an agreement so that the people who require training in Ontario have the same opportunities as people in other provinces and territories to receive the kind of training they deserve and need.

Mr Wettlaufer: Minister, you agree that we need this labour market training agreement. It's an agreement that must treat Ontarians fairly so that workers and people who are looking for work can receive the right training. Is there anything that we in this House, as members of this House, can do to achieve a labour market training agreement?

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: It is totally disappointing, the actions of the members on the other side. We do need a training agreement. Every citizen, every person —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Minister.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I'm sure I have some colleagues in this House who care about the people of Ontario getting the same kind of opportunities that people in other provinces get. I would recommend, in response to the question, that every single member in this House take the opportunity to talk to the 101 Liberal representatives to the federal House and tell them to work on behalf of the people they represent to get a training agreement, to work with us to get a training agreement, and they might ask the question —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Kitchener has asked the question. He deserves to hear the answer, and I'm sure it's difficult for him.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): He's got the answer in front of him.

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon. Minister.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: We do need a training agreement, and every elected person in this House should be talking to their federal counterpart, encouraging them to encourage the minister and the representatives of the ministry to get to the table seriously and to take the needs of Ontario seriously, because we are in a competitive environment and our people need the same kind of training that others need across this country.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): My question is to the Minister of Education. Over the summer I hosted a series of meetings with rural parents in my riding and from beyond to talk about your government's assault on rural schools. You can quote all the statistics until you're blue about how your funding formula helps small and rural schools; you're not fooling anybody. The proof is outside.

Last night, 700 parents packed a meeting in Stratford, desperately concerned about rural school closures. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture is trying to explain it to you. I have been trying. Your government just doesn't get it.

The member for Perth says school closings are not unusual, merely "a continuation of closing the little red schoolhouse." Let me tell you, Minister, Romney school in my riding was not a little red schoolhouse. It was the first central graded school in the county, opened by William Grenville Davis and Darcy McKeough. They applauded the foresight and courage of the residents in forming a township school area, and you have caused it to close. Romney Central is the social, cultural and economic heart of the community.

When are you going to fix your funding formula to recognize the importance of rural and community schools in Ontario?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): These community schools are important. My school when I was growing up in Greensville, Ontario, has recognized its 150th anniversary just this very year, 150

years of service. So this is important, and it's important that communities get involved and parents get involved as the school boards make these accommodation decisions. Certainly there is an opportunity to renew and upgrade our stock of buildings, and the accommodation funding that we are providing to school boards across Ontario is assisting them in terms of providing the proper accommodation.

I can only say that we are funding an unprecedented number of schools, about 200 schools over the next three years, with a flow of about \$1.5 billion in extra funding.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary, member for Windsor-Walkerville.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): Yesterday the Greater Essex County District School Board began budget deliberations on how to deal with their \$18.5-million cut. The chair of that school board said:

"It leaves us in a bad situation as far as negotiating contracts. We just don't have the bucks. Funds have been provided in individual funding envelopes, with very little flexibility to move from one area to another. It's essentially left board officials with almost no input on any of their spending decisions. There's not a heck of a lot we can do," said the chair of the board. "We can do our budget in half an hour because the government made all the decisions."

The chair of our school board was a Tory candidate in 1995.

What do you say to Mr Kennedy and, more importantly, what do you say to the parents, students and communities of Walkerville and Lowe who face school closures as a result of your incompetence, your underfunding, your cuts? What do you say to your candidate in my community about our schools that are going to be closed because of your cuts? What do you say to them, Minister?

Interjections.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Steve, why don't you ask Mike Harris to make you a real minister so you can answer questions?

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Likewise you would have to keep your mouth shut for most of question period.

The Speaker: Member for Scarborough East, if you want to ask a question, you get on question period. Please come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I don't want to hear what you're doing; I just want to hear you come to order. Thank you. Minister.

Hon David Johnson: These are serious matters. The parents, the communities, the school boards are making these decisions, as they have through the years. When the Liberals were in power, school boards closed 136 schools.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Windsor-Walkerville, you've asked the question. You've got to give the minister an opportunity to answer it.

Mr Duncan: He's not answering it.

The Speaker: I don't think it's my job to determine how he answers it. I don't ask you how to ask the question. Give him the opportunity to respond.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister of Agriculture, I don't really think that's an appropriate response.

Hon David Johnson: Last night in Thames Valley the director of education said, "The board has enough leeway in its budget to keep all high schools open and possibly all elementary schools." There had been rumours that up to 29 schools were being closed in Thames Valley yet the director says they have the leeway within the funding formula to keep all of their schools open.

The OSSTF in Durham says, "The Durham District School Board has access to millions of dollars more this year than ever before," and they have enough money "to settle with the teachers and open secondary public schools immediately."

The director of the York Region District School Board says, "The funding formula is wonderful news."

We need to allow the school boards —

The Speaker: Thank you.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I want to raise but one example of what's happening to local property owners in our community, particularly when it comes to the increase in commercial property taxes. I have one business owner — there is a group of more than just himself; there's a whole bunch of businesses in the same situation — that is, Dupont Motors in Timmins. Urgel Gravel is the owner. Last year his property taxes paid out were \$56,000; this year, \$111,000, an increase of 97%.

My question to you, Minister, is quite simple: What are you going to do to fix the inadequate system that you have changed that makes Urgel pay more taxes than he did last year?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'll refer this question to the Treasurer.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I'd be interested in knowing what tools the municipality used in its communities to lessen the impact, especially on the small business community. Perhaps in your supplementary you could tell me exactly which of the eight tools that were provided to municipalities they chose to use to have a direct lowering impact on small commercial properties.

1510

Mr Bisson: The tool the municipality would have liked to use was a hammer, because that's what you've done to them, quite simple.

The problem we have over here is not what the municipality has done; it's what you have done by merging the school boards together in our area. We have had a number of school boards that have been merged together, and as a result the directive from your government was that they were to average the tax rate applied for school taxes on

commercial property tax assessment. As a result of the decision of your government — not the municipality of the city of Timmins; your government, your Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance — we have seen school taxes on commercial property tax assessment go up by how much? By 159%.

Minister, what are you going to do to fix the problems you have created for the commercial taxpayers in my community and other communities across this province?

Hon Mr Eves: That is absolutely incorrect. Municipalities had the following tools to use:

Did your municipality adopt a three-tiered commercial rate?

Did they assign a lower commercial rate for the smallest commercial properties in their municipality so they could pay one tenth or one third or one quarter, whatever they choose? They know who the small commercial properties in their municipality are. Did they choose that tool, yes or no?

Did they create any new classes? We created four new classes. Did they create even one, let alone four, in their municipality, yes or no?

They have the option to phrase it in over eight years. Did they do that, yes or no?

They have the option to have a zero tax increase for any senior citizen, any disabled person in their municipality. Did they offer that, yes or no?

When you start to answer some of those questions, those are responsibilities of municipalities. They've asked for increased control, they've asked for increased ability, responsibility; they have it.

TVONTARIO

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): My question is for the Minister without Portfolio with responsibility for privatization. My question relates to the announcement made last June about the future role of TVOntario. I was pleased to hear that TVOntario will return to its educational roots and will change with the times to include new technologies in support of lifelong learning.

TVOntario's television broadcasts have always been a teaching tool. However, today's teachers and students need a wider choice of resources that reflect growing information technology. I wonder if the minister could provide further detail regarding the technology component of his TVOntario announcement.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): I want to thank the honourable member for Durham-York for her questions and her very keen interest in this issue.

As members know, on June 26 we announced the outcome of our review of TVOntario. We said we believed at that time, and we still believe, that there's a role for the province to play in supporting lifelong learning, and returning ownership in a restructured and refocused TVOntario will help with that.

To get there, TVOntario will be structured — Mr Speaker, I know you're keen to hear this — into two

divisions, one broadcasting and one that will deal with the application of new technologies to learning, lifelong learning in all categories of one's life these days. The centre will serve as a platform for the application of that technology. I'm quite excited that in addition to just the standard medium of TV, when this facility is up and running and operational we'll be able to see the application of today's new technologies to the broad spectrum of lifelong learning here in Ontario.

PETITIONS

TRANSPORTATION OF DANGEROUS GOODS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Ontario Legislature and deals with the truck explosion which took place in Walden, for which there is a public meeting this evening, and we invite all the residents of Walden to go out to it. We invite the Minister of Transportation, who is not paying attention, to come out to it, but of course he won't, because he doesn't believe that a public inquiry is important.

"Whereas a tractor-trailer truck carrying a variety of explosives was involved in a single-vehicle accident on Highway 17 west, near Sudbury, causing an explosion which destroyed a 100-foot section of the highway and created a crater 15 feet deep;

"Whereas a shock wave, resulting from the explosion broke doors, windows, frames and soffits on houses, causing significant personal and property damage;

"Whereas the residents of Ontario have the right to know what emergency plans are in place when dangerous cargo is being transported on our highways;

"Whereas the residents of Ontario have a right to know what protections are in place for residents who live in close proximity to vehicles carrying destructive materials;

"Whereas the residents of Ontario have the right to know what restrictions and precautions the Ministry of Transportation places on companies who haul dangerous cargo;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Mike Harris government call a public inquiry into this accident in order to make recommendations that will ensure this type of horrific accident does not happen again and to answer the many questions the people of northern Ontario have," for which this Minister of Transportation, Tony Clement, has provided to date no answers at all and will not, as minister, call a public inquiry into this horrific accident.

This is signed by approximately 2,000 people, and I affix my signature to it.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Harris funding cutbacks are having a devastating impact on hospitals and patient care across Ontario, and have resulted in an anticipated \$38-million deficit at the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals; and

"Whereas the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals will receive \$4 million less in revenue from the Ministry of Health and other sources; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris funding cuts are causing a crisis in hospital care in Hamilton-Wentworth, with hospitals facing huge deficits, cuts to patient care and bed closings; and

"Whereas Scott Rowand, president of the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals, spoke out recently in the Hamilton Spectator saying, 'For the first time in my career, I don't know how to fix this problem other than an awful lot of closures of programs and services needed by the community'; and

"Whereas Mr Rowand went on to say: 'We need more cash in the system and we need it now. And that is cash to deal with the issues that we are dealing with today. Don't ask us to do anything more because people in the system are at their limit.'

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Harris government stop underfunding Ontario's hospitals to fund tax cuts for the wealthy and act immediately to restore funding to the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals so they can continue providing quality health care services to the people of Hamilton-Wentworth."

I continue to support these petitioners by adding my name.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I have an important petition here and I would encourage everyone to listen. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the PC Party promised in the Common Sense Revolution to cut provincial income taxes by 30% in three years; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government lived up to that promise; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government did so six months ahead of schedule" — surprising — "and

"Whereas Ontario now has the lowest provincial income tax rate and 91% of all taxpayers now have seen a tax cut of 30% or greater; and

"Whereas this results in 655,000 lower-income families and individuals paying no income tax at all; and

"Whereas Ontario's strong economic climate has contributed to the private sector creating over 375,000 net new jobs in Ontario since 1995; and

"Whereas Ontario's outdated property tax system has been replaced by the new Ontario fair assessment system; and

"Whereas the new system is fairer, clearer and more consistent; and

"Whereas low-income seniors and the disabled are protected from sudden tax increases; and

"Whereas changes to the Development Charges Act will make new homes more affordable; and

"Whereas high-income earners now pay a new fair share health care levy; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has introduced a rigorous new road safety program that includes some of the toughest measures to cut back drunk and dangerous driving; and

"Whereas we promised in the Common Sense Revolution to maintain health care spending at no less than \$17.4 billion annually" — unlike the Liberals — "and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has exceeded this spending every year since it was elected; and

"Whereas total health care spending for 1998-99 will be in excess of \$18.5 billion, the highest in Ontario's history; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has achieved this despite cuts in transfer payments from the federal Liberal government of more than \$2.4 billion; and

"Whereas this recent survey of the Fraser Institute provides that health care waiting lists in Ontario are the shortest anywhere in Canada; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is placing a greater emphasis on community-based health services in order to better care for an aging population; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is eliminating waste and duplication in the health care sector and reinvesting every penny we find into quality services, and this results in an investment of over three billion new dollars;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to proceed forthwith with the commitment made in the Common Sense Revolution and to continue to pursue policies which make Ontario the best place to live, to work and to raise a family."

1520

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): I'd just like to make a statement. Petitions are way too long. They should not be used as a speech or as a statement. I notice a lot of people want to read their petitions, so you take away that privilege of everyone. I would ask all of you to keep your petitions as short as possible.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I have a petition from Catherine St Pierre from Kingsville addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences...," and that's the essence of the petition. I move to:

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a short petition regarding a petition of non-confidence against the Mike Harris government signed by outraged Hamiltonians like Doug Elliott, Terry Lewis, Dave Manson, Michael Gill and Michael West. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has not listened to the public on Bill 160; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has chosen to overtly deceive the people of Ontario as to the true objectives of Bill 160; and

"Whereas we, the people, believe no government has a mandate to act in isolation of the wishes of the electorate of this province and we have lost confidence in the government;

"Therefore we, the undersigned electors of Ontario, petition the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature and call a general election forthwith."

I support this petition and sign it now.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and/or sell chemicals and/or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas the health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I'd like to assure the Speaker that this was indeed from my riding, and Ernie Roberts from the riding of Durham East; I can assure him that the petition from that area certainly was not coming from that riding.

"Whereas Mike Harris has imposed skyrocketing taxes on small business owners in Windsor because of his government's downloading debacle;

"Whereas many small business owners in Windsor who pay commercial property taxes face hikes of more than 100%;

"Whereas the Harris government's property tax assessment system is confusing, chaotic and an administrative nightmare for municipalities;

"Whereas the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers called the Harris tax assessment system a 'high-risk strategy' that will create 'serious problems' for taxpayers and municipalities; and

"Whereas Windsor small businesses facing massive tax increases will be forced to pass on these increases to their customers, causing a decrease in business and causing the Ontario economy to suffer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to develop a plan to provide relief for small business."

I thank the members of our community who signed that petition.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the Harris government's 'downloading' to municipal taxpayers is directly responsible for the \$36.3-million shortfall to the region of Hamilton-Wentworth; and

"Whereas the Harris government 'downloading' is directly responsible for creating a property tax crisis in our region; and

"Whereas the Harris government, while boasting about its 30% tax cut which benefits mainly the wealthy, is making hard-working families, seniors, homeowners and businesses pay the price with outrageous property tax hikes and user fees for services; and

"Whereas city and regional councillors are being unfairly blamed and forced to explain these huge tax hikes, Hamiltonians know that what's really going on is that they are being forced to pay huge property tax increases to fund Harris's 30% tax giveaway to the rich; and

"Whereas homeowners, including seniors and low-income families, are facing huge property tax increases ranging from several hundred to thousands of dollars; and

"Whereas the Harris government 'downloading' has led to huge property tax increases for business that will force many small and medium-sized businesses in Hamilton-Wentworth to close or leave the community, putting people out of work; and

"Whereas Hamilton-Wentworth region is proposing that the Harris government share in the costs of an expanded rebate program, worth about \$3 million region-wide;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Harris government immediately eliminate the \$38-million downloading shortfall that is devastating and angering homeowners as well as killing businesses in Hamilton-Wentworth."

I support this petition.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): "Whereas the Mike Harris government promised in the Common Sense Revolution to maintain health care spending at no less than \$17.4 billion annually; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has exceeded that spending floor every year since being elected; and

"Whereas total health care spending for 1998-99 will be \$18.5 billion, the highest in Ontario's history; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has achieved this despite cuts in transfer payments by the federal Liberal government of more than \$2.4 billion; and

"Whereas a recent survey by the Fraser Institute proves that health care waiting lists in Ontario are the shortest anywhere in Canada; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is placing a greater emphasis on community-based health services in order to better care for an aging population; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is eliminating waste and duplication in the health care sector and reinvesting every penny" we find "into quality services; and

"Whereas this has resulted in reinvestments of over \$3 billion; and

"Whereas seniors will benefit from the government's \$1.2-billion investment to increase seniors' beds by 35%, including 2,200 new beds in Toronto alone; and

"Whereas \$75 million is being invested over the next two years to open hospital beds during peak demand periods in order to handle emergency patients; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government created Cancer Care Ontario to coordinate and integrate cancer treatment services province-wide; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has pledged \$24.3 million to dramatically expand breast cancer screening; and

"Whereas 140,000 additional low-income earners are eligible to receive help with their drug costs through the expansion of the Trillium drug plan; and

"Whereas over 520 prescription drugs have been added to the Ontario drug plan formulary, giving seniors and others who rely on the ODB program a wider range of products to serve their health care needs; and

"Whereas the increase in senior care beds is expected to create 27,500 new jobs in the health care industry;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to proceed with fulfilling the commitments made in the Common Sense Revolution and continuing to pursue policies which will make Ontario the best place to live, work, invest and raise a family."

1530

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LAW SOCIETY AMENDMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE BARREAU

Mr Harnick moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act to amend the Law Society Act / Projet de loi 53, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Barreau.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Today we proceed with the second reading of Bill 53, the Law Society Amendment Act. I will be sharing my time with the members for London South and York East.

This bill will strengthen the Law Society of Upper Canada's powers to safeguard consumers of legal services from unethical and incompetent lawyers. These reforms mean tougher, more exacting standards for lawyers, faster resolution of complaints and a stronger voice for the public at the law society. In doing so, this legislation will better protect the millions of Ontarians who at some point in their lives consume legal services, whether to purchase a home, to prepare a will or to resolve family or other civil or criminal matters.

This bill amends the Law Society Act, which makes the law society responsible for governing and regulating Ontario's lawyers. The law society's mandate is to govern lawyers in the public interest. We are modernizing the act because it has not substantially changed in over 25 years and does not reflect current expectations of self-regulated professions. It is a cumbersome statute that impedes the law society's ability to thoroughly investigate complaints, to prevent harm to the public and to deal quickly with unethical and incompetent lawyers.

The law society has requested that this government implement reforms to ensure that the society can more effectively protect the public. Today's public expects the highest quality of legal services. The amendments we are proposing will help to meet those expectations by greatly enhancing consumer protection. Lawyers will be required to meet the highest professional competency standards. The law society will now have real teeth to respond to

public complaints more quickly, to ensure that issues are settled as early as possible and to give complainants a stronger voice in the hearing process. In short, these reforms will ensure that the law society evolves to meet changing consumer needs and community standards.

I would like to thank the law society for its help throughout the preparation of these reforms. The reforms have been developed in consultation with the public and reflect substantial public input. The law society held focus group sessions and surveyed the public regarding the complaints process. Participants found the reforms to be balanced, fair and in the public interest. Input was also sought from the major law organizations, other self-regulating professions such as doctors and accountants, and consumers' organizations, including the Consumers' Council of Canada and the Consumers' Association of Canada.

The principles embodied in the reforms we are proposing were strongly endorsed by the public during the consultations. We have worked with the law society to develop and refine this consumer protection package. Throughout our discussions, we strongly advised that the reforms must benefit the public and strengthen protection for Ontarians.

I would like to provide a brief summary of the key elements of this reform package.

First, the amendments will double the number of public representatives on the law society's governing board from four to eight. This will give the public a greater role in the disciplinary process and in the governance of the law society and will increase the law society's accountability to the public.

Second, the amendments will improve the public complaint system by providing for the appointment of a new complaints resolution commissioner. The complaints resolution commissioner will ensure that complainants are dealt with fairly and that complaints receive thorough attention. The complaints resolution commissioner will not only have the power to review complaints, but will also have the power to investigate and resolve minor complaints outside the formal discipline process. This will greatly improve service for the public. To ensure independence, the complaints resolution commissioner will function at arm's length from the law society and will not be a practising lawyer.

Third, the amendments will allow the law society to regulate not only the conduct of lawyers, but the quality of services provided by lawyers. The law society will now be able to set clear standards of professional competence and will have the power to enforce compliance with these standards. The law society will also have the power to impose a variety of orders to ensure that lawyers improve their skills. The result will be tougher, enforceable competence standards for lawyers and enhanced protection for the public.

Fourth, law firms will be able to form limited liability partnerships. This will permit lawyers to better compete in the increasingly competitive global marketplace for legal services. The public will continue to be protected because

lawyers must meet more rigorous insurance standards as well as the requirements set out in the Partnerships Act.

Fifth, the amendments clarify the definition of "incapacity" and permit the law society to issue remedial orders for treatment or counselling for lawyers suffering from a mental illness, alcohol or drug abuse. This will strengthen the law society's power to improve standards and, again, protect the public. The amendments will ensure that the law society has the same remedial powers to deal with members who are found to be incompetent as other self-regulating professions.

Sixth, the reforms will give the law society the clear legislative mandate it needs to thoroughly investigate complaints and require the cooperation of lawyers. The law society will be required to investigate once it receives information suggesting the lawyer may have engaged in professional misconduct.

The reforms include safeguards to protect privileged and confidential information obtained by the law society during an investigation. The law society will be prohibited from using privileged documents or information for any purpose except its investigations and any consequential proceedings. These safeguards strike an appropriate balance between protecting the public from incompetent and unethical lawyers and protecting the privacy interests of lawyers' clients.

Seventh, the law society will have a range of new powers to protect the public where lawyers are acting improperly. These include broader powers to suspend lawyers under investigation before disciplinary proceedings have begun where there is a danger to the public; increased authority to freeze client assets under a lawyer's control; and enhanced powers to prevent the unauthorized practice of law by disbarred lawyers and to compensate persons who have suffered as a result of unauthorized practice.

Finally, the amendments will streamline law society hearings and appeals and divert minor administrative infractions from the formal hearing process. This will free up time and resources for more serious matters. The reforms will allow convocation to make rules of practice and procedure applicable to proceedings before hearing and appeals panel.

This will allow the law society to set rules of procedure which will apply to the same types of hearings and to adjust the degree of procedural formality in accordance with the type of proceeding. These improvements will remove procedural inefficiencies, delays and red tape from the complaints and discipline process to permit faster, more efficient resolution of complaints.

The law society expects to reduce the time it takes to complete the complaints and discipline process from the current average of 30 months to 12 months. Again, this is better service and protection for the public.

In conclusion, these much-needed changes will give the law society the important tools and powers it needs to govern Ontario's lawyers in the public interest.

These amendments are part of the Ministry of the Attorney General's ongoing efforts to improve the justice

system for the people of this province. They are needed, they are timely and they are in the best interests of all Ontarians. I urge all members of the House to support this legislation so that all Ontarians can benefit from stronger consumer protection and better legal services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Further debate?

Mr Bob Wood (London South): As some members of the House know, I've practised law for some 26 years in this province and I've long been a critic of our profession's tendency to resist change and not understand the concerns of the public. I think this bill is a strong sign that the legal profession is beginning to understand what's needed and to start to get it done.

I think there are many what I would call user-friendly changes for the better in this bill. I'd like to comment very briefly on a few of the key changes.

Doubling the number of lay benchers from four to eight: The law society and the profession badly need input from the public. I think this will be one effective way of increasing that input. Left to my own devices, I might even give the public greater representation than eight on the bench.

The complaints resolution commissioner: The two key things that I think are important in this office, aside from the office itself, are the fact that the commissioner is going to be independent from the law society and is not going to be a practising lawyer. So often we hear of legalisms, obfuscation and basically a general lack of understanding by the public when a complaint is put forward. I think this commissioner is a real step forward in avoiding some of the problems we've had in the past.

1540

Greater capacity to regulate the quality of service provided by lawyers: That is an area where we do have to get up to the late 1990s and I think this act is going to move us there.

Limited liability partnerships: We all hear about how we function in a global economy and of course it's true. Having our profession among the forefront of the various professions throughout the world is going to be a step forward for all Ontarians.

Investigative powers being enhanced: This I think affords due process where it's needed but also puts the client first. The enhanced investigative powers are going to be a very positive step forward.

New powers aimed at protecting and compensating the public where lawyers have acted improperly: These powers I think are going to help the small number of people who are victimized by lawyers obtain fair treatment and obtain it quickly.

Proceedings being streamlined to permit faster, more efficient resolution of complaints: We all have heard of the long, dragged-out proceedings that happen from time to time. I think the law society has got the message that change has to happen and this change in legislation is going to assist in satisfying the public.

I'm not going to speak further on this bill, other than to commend it to the House. I truly think it's a step forward

and that our profession is going to be able to offer better service and they're going to be able to offer it more competitively, thereby enhancing the service to the people and the economy of our province.

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to join in the discussion this afternoon on the subject of this very important bill, a very significant development in the Law Society Act. I might just touch on some of the elements that are featured in the act to help point out the importance of the amendments that are being introduced in this bill today and the significance of these developments to the legal profession and to all Ontarians generally.

The amendments that are included in the legislation before us today will strengthen the Law Society of Upper Canada in its powers to regulate lawyers and protect consumers of legal services. The amendments are focused primarily on increasing the accountability of the profession and the responsiveness of the profession to the needs of the consuming public.

The Law Society Act is a statute that has not been substantially changed in well over 25 years. The act in its current form hampers and impedes the law society's ability to investigate complaints thoroughly, to resolve complaints quickly and to protect the public from unethical and incompetent lawyers. The reforms that are introduced in this legislation mean tougher, more exacting standards for lawyers, faster resolution of complaints and a much stronger voice for the public in the Law Society of Upper Canada.

The law society will, with these amendments, finally have real teeth to respond to public complaints far more quickly than ever in the past to ensure that issues are settled as early as possible and to give complainants a much stronger voice in the hearing process.

The law society frankly has been developing a comprehensive reform package for many years and we are very pleased, as a government, to help bring these thoughts forward in the form of this bill this afternoon. The ministry, in consultation with the law society, has developed these reforms to ensure that the society could more effectively carry out its mandate to protect the public.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know what the member has to say it extremely important and there should be a sufficient number of members in the House to listen to it. I don't believe we have a quorum right now.

The Acting Speaker: Would you please check if we have a quorum.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for York East.

Mr Parker: As I was saying, the reforms represented in this legislation before us this afternoon have been a number of years in the making. The thrust and purpose of these reforms is to ensure that the Law Society of Upper

Canada can more effectively carry out its mandate to protect the public and consumers of legal services.

This reform package has been developed in consultation with the broader public. The amendments have received substantial public input on the elements to be included in the reform package. Many focus group sessions have been held and surveys of the public regarding the complaints process have been carried out in the development of the provisions in this legislation.

Participants in the focus group sessions and in the various other processes that have been invoked to bring the thoughts forward to the public and to receive their views have indicated that the proposed reforms are balanced, fair and very much in the public interest. That is their intention.

Input has been sought on these reforms through other groups as well, including major legal organizations, other professions and of course consumer organizations, and again there was uniform support for the amendments included in this legislation.

What are the key amendments to the Law Society Act that are brought forward in this legislation this afternoon? I might enumerate some of the key ones in the time available to me at the moment.

For one thing, the number of lay benchers in the law society will double from the current number of four to eight lay benchers. This, of course, will strengthen the public's representation on the law society board and throughout the regulatory process.

Another very significant element in the reform package is that a complaints resolution commissioner will be appointed. This special commissioner will have power to investigate and resolve all number of minor complaints that come before the law society. Of course, this will improve the complaints system by ensuring the public that their complaints are dealt with fairly and expeditiously. The commissioner will be independent from the law society and will not be a practising lawyer. They may very well have legal training, may very well be an experienced lawyer or a person with experience in the legal profession, but will not be at the time of serving as a commissioner a practising lawyer.

The law society will have greater capacity to regulate the quality of services that are provided by lawyers under its aegis.

The law society will be able to set professional competence standards, to conduct practice reviews and to issue a wide variety of remedial orders aimed at improving the skills and practice management of members of the legal profession, and as well, where appropriate, to direct members of the legal profession to seek medical treatment or counselling in those cases where that is what is needed to help address a problem in their practice. This will greatly enhance consumer protection. The power to order a member to obtain or continue with medical treatment or counselling is comparable with the regulatory powers of many other professions in this province and in fact in other jurisdictions as well.

1550

Also in this reform package, the law society's investigative powers will be significantly enhanced. This will provide it with specific authority to examine client files and to require explanations from lawyers in appropriate situations.

In addition to that, the law society will have the power to apply to court for an order for search and seizure in the event that a lawyer refuses to comply with an investigation. This, of course, is a very important protection for the public and for other members of the legal profession who come up against such a member of the practising bar.

It's important to note in this context that the privileged and confidential information obtained by the law society in this process, in the course of such an investigation, will be protected and the interests of the clients involved will be safeguarded. The amendments will prohibit the law society from disclosing privileged information for any purpose other than for the investigation in question or any other consequential proceedings. In all other respects, the confidentiality of the information that is retrieved in the course of an investigation will be protected and the interests of the clients involved will be protected throughout.

Several new powers in the legislation are aimed directly at protecting and compensating the public where lawyers have acted improperly. Some of these measures include enhanced powers to prevent the unauthorized practice of law by disbarred lawyers, the power to suspend lawyers under investigation before disciplinary proceedings have begun, the power to order a lawyer to reimburse a client for all or some of the fees and disbursements that have been paid, and clearer authority to freeze client assets under a lawyer's control, again all measures directed at protecting the interests and needs and rights of clients who have found themselves being served by a lawyer who has acted improperly.

Proceedings will be streamlined to permit faster, more efficient resolution of complaints against members of the legal profession. One of the problems that has been encountered by clients, legal service consumers and, frankly, by members of the legal profession is the degree of complexity and the time involved in pursuing a complaint through the resolution process within the current rules that govern the law society. These amendments brought forward in the legislation this afternoon include provisions that will streamline the process to get at resolutions far more readily than has been possible in the past.

Some of the provisions that lead to this result are that hearing panels will have the authority not only to determine questions of fact and law but also to impose a penalty, so that the panel that is dealing with the matter can deal with the matter in its totality and not only with a part of it, leaving other portions to be dealt with at another time by another body. It's a far more speedy and expeditious handling of matters in that respect. Also, minor infractions will be diverted from the formal hearing process by expanding the grounds for summary suspensions so that minor, simple matters can proceed far more expedi-

tiously than in the past and be dealt with in the summary process.

A new appeal panel will be created that will have the authority to hear appeals of disciplinary capacity and readmission appeals. One thing that will do is reduce the number of appeals that get heard by the Divisional Court; far more expeditious resolutions of the matters brought before the law society for disciplinary and remedial attention.

These amendments included in the bill before us this afternoon are all directed at and will achieve the result of modernizing the law society's complaints and discipline process, to the benefit of the practising bar and, most important, the consuming public.

During the consultation process that preceded the drafting and introduction of the bill, the public told us that the current system is far too slow and far too cumbersome. Frankly, lawyers have told us that as well. The system that governs the resolution of these matters at present was developed long ago, in a different time, a different age and under different circumstances than the world we live in today. These amendments bring the Law Society of Upper Canada into line with expectations of the current day. The government is responding directly to the concerns that have been raised in this reform and has addressed these concerns in this reform package.

The amendments are aimed at allowing the law society to respond to public complaints far more quickly and to set much tougher, more exacting standards for lawyers. I want to emphasize that it's not just punitive in its nature. The emphasis of the reforms in this legislation is on prevention and remediation, to prevent misconduct by members of the legal profession by raising standards, by raising the expectations of the practising bar, and also to direct members of the practising bar to help, assistance, remediation and other help that's required from time to time in the course of their practice to get them back on track, to help make them better lawyers, to help them do a better job of serving their clients.

For those lawyers — there are some, not many, but there are some. Every once in a while the newspapers will carry accounts of lawyers who do not comply with the expectations that are held of them, and every once in a while there are clients who are victimized by members of the legal profession who act in an unscrupulous or unprincipled or improper manner. The penalties and remedies that are available to the law society to attack those egregious examples of misconduct have been stiffened and strengthened and, as I said off the top, given more teeth than they've ever had in the past, all with the direction of protecting the consuming public and protecting the lawyers who practise in accordance with the rules. It's in the interests of everyone involved — lawyers, the court system and clients — that we have a competent, conscientious, law-abiding practising bar.

The changes that are in this legislation are part of the government's ongoing commitment to working with the public and with our justice partners to find the best solutions to the problems that are faced by the justice system,

to face those problems and to fix them. I encourage all members of the House to support this legislation so that all members of the Ontario public can benefit from the stronger consumer protection and better legal services that are to come about as a result of the provisions in this legislation.

There has been some concern raised by some quarters in the Ontario section of the Canadian Bar Association as to the strength of some of the remedial provisions that are found in this legislation. There are some members of the practising bar who are concerned that maybe there are too many teeth in these provisions and that the provisions give the law society perhaps more authority over the practising legal profession than is warranted. That voice has been brought forward and those concerns have been brought to bear and have been borne in mind with the amendments to the Law Society Act that are found in this legislation.

In this context I want to quote, if I may, from an address delivered by Mr Harvey Strosberg, the treasurer of the Law Society of Upper Canada. The treasurer of the Law Society of Upper Canada is the top dog for the law society, the body that governs the legal profession in Ontario. Mr Strosberg's remarks are most supportive of the provisions in this legislation and I'll just quote from him briefly. In an essay that appears in the summer edition of the Ontario Lawyers Gazette from this past summer Mr Strosberg indicates:

"The Attorney General of Ontario, Charles Harnick, and the government of Ontario should be applauded for their initiative in bringing this important legislation to fruition. One of its primary purposes is to enhance the society's — that's the law society's — "regulatory powers, ensuring its capacity to govern in the public interest.

"The current provisions of the Law Society Act" — those are the current provisions that are to be amended by the bill that is before us this afternoon — "particularizing the society's powers have been in place, essentially unchanged, for nearly 30 years. They are moribund. Experience has taught us that the provisions we have in place now are ineffectual in addressing and abating the manifold problems associated with lawyers' professional misconduct and the important issues of competency and capacity."

This is the top dog of the Law Society of Upper Canada saying these words:

"Because of a handful of dishonest and dishonourable lawyers" — I emphasize that there are not many who fall into this category, but we know there have been some and it's important we make sure that number is kept to an absolute minimum and that they are dealt with as effectively as possible — "the public's trust and confidence in the profession's honesty have been seriously eroded. Moreover, because of dishonest lawyers, the law society is obliged to maintain the lawyers fund for client compensation, to which each member of the profession must contribute."

1600

What that means in essence is that every member of the practising bar, all of the conscientious, all of the honour-

able, all of the law-abiding members of the practising bar, are required to pay into a compensation fund to address the problems created by the dishonourable few. What that leads to directly is higher fees to the consuming public. That's the situation at present because the rules in the Law Society Act and the powers available to the law society have proven inadequate to deal with the situation of some of the very few dishonourable lawyers who have come across our path in the recent few years.

I quote further from Mr Strosberg as follows: "Bill 53 is designed to uphold the paramountcy of the public interest, and at long last, to help stop the few dishonest lawyers from undermining and jeopardizing the legitimate interests and good faith efforts of the profession as a whole."

Those are the words of Mr Strosberg, the treasurer of the Law Society of Upper Canada, the top dog of the Law Society of Upper Canada, in support of this legislation and in response to concerns that have been raised by some members of the Canadian Bar Association, which is in effect the trade union for the legal profession. That is Mr Strosberg in his response to the concerns raised by some members of the bar association in respect of the strength of the remedies and the investigatory authority that are bestowed on the law society by the act that is before us this afternoon in order to protect the consuming public and the honourable, honest, law-abiding members of the legal profession.

The idea that a regulatory body should be permitted, for the public good, to require its members to produce privileged documents and to provide confidential information and to serve as a repository of privilege and confidentiality for such documents and information is a good idea, but by no means a new one. Of course, that is one of the authorities that is provided for in this legislation, that where a lawyer is under investigation for that lawyer's conduct, where that lawyer has refused to comply with the investigatory process, the law society has the authority to step in and to review the documents and review the records of that lawyer's practice, in the public interest. That is a concept that is in this legislation. As Mr Strosberg says, it is a good idea and, as Mr Strosberg says, it is by no means a new idea. It's just an idea that hasn't been in effect in Ontario until the introduction of this legislation that we are considering this afternoon.

In his remarks, Mr Strosberg quotes Lord Denning, no less, as follows:

"In my opinion that rule [a rule requiring a solicitor to produce, for inspection by the Law Society, books of account and other financial records] is a valid rule which overrides any privilege or confidence which otherwise might subsist between solicitor and client. It enables the Law Society for the public good to hold an investigation, even if it involves getting information as to clients' affairs. But they and their accountant must, of course, themselves respect the obligation of confidence. They must not use it for any purpose except the investigation, and any consequential proceedings. If there should be subsequent application to the disciplinary committee, the information can be used for that purpose."

Those are the words of Lord Denning in support of provisions virtually identical to the provisions that are being brought forward here in this House this afternoon. Lord Denning understood some time ago the importance of legislation of this sort. I'm very pleased that our government is bringing forward legislation today that advances on these ideas.

What protection is there for the public in this situation? As Lord Denning recommended, and as I have indicated earlier, all files and all records and all information that are retrieved in the course of such an investigation, an investigation of a lawyer who has refused to comply with reasonable requests from the Law Society and a lawyer who by all accounts and all appearances is guilty of misconduct in the profession and puts other professionals and indeed the consuming public at risk, where a lawyer refuses to comply with that investigation, the Law Society will have the authority to step in, protect the records, review them but only in the context of the investigation of that lawyer's conduct. In all other respects, the information that is retrieved will be kept confidential and the privilege and confidentiality of the clients will be preserved and protected.

I would suggest that, given the context of such a situation, the records are most likely to be far more secure and far more safe under the authority of the Law Society than they would be in the hands of the member of the profession who has been under investigation. Of course, it would only be under the extreme situation where such an investigation would be necessary.

Given that there's some more time available to me and I see that the member from High Park is hanging on every word of this presentation, I might go into some greater detail as to some of the other elements of the legislation. Maybe it would be useful to review the provisions in the legislation and perhaps compare and contrast them with the provisions that are currently in effect.

Maybe, when I'm done with that, at the request of the member for High Park-Swansea, I could in fact go more deeply into the career of Lord Denning and perhaps review some of the other work that Lord Denning did and some of the other investigations in which Lord Denning participated, that being possibly a timely matter at this point, given world developments underway these days and proceedings underway in another legislative forum in another place not that terribly far away, no more than one day's commute from where we are now. Somehow the name Lord Denning seems very much appropriate and the memory of Lord Denning seems very much appropriate at this particular juncture in the course of history, in the course of developments in the legislative world, particularly in the western world immediately to our south.

But perhaps I could leave further discussions of Lord Denning and his experiences and his career for later in the discussion this afternoon. Other members might like to develop further on those thoughts.

1610

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): The member from Kingston will probably deal with that.

Mr Parker: As the member for High Park-Swansea is suggesting, the member for Kingston and The Islands might have some thoughts or comments on the subject, I don't know, but I certainly look forward to his comments. I encourage him to support this legislation and to support the aims underlying the reforms that are included in the legislation that is before us this afternoon.

I might just review some of the key elements of the legislation to compare and contrast with the corresponding provisions in the current Law Society Act. For example, under the current legislation the Lieutenant Governor in Council is authorized to appoint four lay benchers to the Law Society of Upper Canada in convocation. The legislation that is before us this afternoon authorizes and empowers the Lieutenant Governor in Council to appoint eight lay benchers. Of course, the whole thrust and purpose of that is to increase the degree of public participation in the governance of the legal profession.

Under the current legislation, in the complaints review process the lay benchers who review complaints at the request of complainants have no power to investigate or to resolve complaints. The act does not provide for informal resolution of minor complaints. Contrast that with the provisions of the legislation before us today, in which a new complaints resolution commissioner is created who will replace lay benchers in reviewing complaints. The commissioner will have the power to investigate and resolve minor complaints informally, expeditiously, quickly. As I've mentioned earlier, the commissioner will not be a practising lawyer and will, of course, function at arm's length from the Law Society of Upper Canada.

In the general area of professional competence of members of the legal profession, the current act contains no competence standards whatsoever. The Law Society of Upper Canada relies on voluntary compliance with standards. Sanctions for incompetence are punitive rather than remedial, and continuing legal education is strictly a voluntary matter under the current regime. Under the provisions in the legislation before us, the Law Society of Upper Canada has the power to set and to publish competence standards, actual standards of practice for the legal profession, and to set out grounds for breach of those standards. The law society will have new powers to conduct practice reviews or competence hearings and to impose a wide range of remedial orders.

I emphasize the remedial nature of the orders. Rather than waiting until an error has occurred and then disciplining the lawyer for having committed the error, the whole thrust of the reforms before us this afternoon is to prevent those errors from arising in the first place and, where a lawyer appears to be heading off track for whatever reason, to take steps to bring that lawyer back on track before it's too late. So it's an emphasis on remedial approaches rather than punitive approaches and it's all aimed at protecting the consuming public.

Some of the remedial orders that could be invoked are participation in practice improvement or mentoring programs and perhaps making continuing legal education a mandatory matter. Those authorities are in the legislation

and the law society is empowered to use its judgment in determining just when, where and how those authorities might be brought to bear. The current act provides very little scope for the remedial approach to problems in the legal practice, and some of these problems arise from time to time in areas of mental incompetence, mental or physical illness, other illness or, in some cases, alcohol or drug abuse.

Under the reforms in this legislation this afternoon, there is a clarification given to the definition of "incapacity." It enables the Law Society of Upper Canada to hold a hearing to determine whether a member is incapable of practising by reasons of mental incompetence, mental illness, illness, alcohol or substance abuse. The law society is given a broader power and broader authority to make remedial orders as appropriate, such as treatment or counselling or working under the supervision of another lawyer — again emphasizing the remedial nature of the provision.

At present the Law Society Act sets out penalties for misconduct. There will continue to be penalties for misconduct, but in addition to penalties for misconduct, there will be a host of remedial orders that can be given.

At present the Law Society Act is very lacking in the definition of the law society's investigative powers, the powers that the law society might be able to invoke in order to investigate the conduct of a member of the legal profession. That's corrected in the bill before us this afternoon. This bill gives the law society explicit powers to investigate misconduct, incapacity, incompetence and so on. It will set out powers to gain access to lawyers' offices during office hours; to examine client files, records and systems; to require explanations from lawyers where explanations are in order for the conduct of the lawyer on a particular file or in a particular matter and the lawyer's conduct with respect to particular clients.

The bill also gives the law society powers to obtain search and seizure orders which can be used in the course of such an investigation.

The law society is required to maintain the confidentiality of any information that is obtained in the course of such a process. I have spoken at some length on that matter already.

I might bring my comments to a close by detailing one other element in the bill before us. Under the current legislation, the law society must first obtain a conviction against a disbarred lawyer for unauthorized practice before seeking an injunction. Sometimes that's too late to protect the interest that is most at stake, that being the interest of the consuming public. One of the key provisions in the bill before us is to permit the law society to seek an injunction against a disbarred lawyer without first having obtained a conviction for unauthorized practice. That is directed entirely at safeguarding the conscientious, law-abiding practising member of the bar and at safeguarding the needs and concerns and rights of the consuming public.

With those remarks, I will close my submissions to the debate this afternoon. I encourage all members of the

House to support this bill, as the law society itself has urged us to do.

Thank you very much for allowing me this opportunity to share my thoughts with you this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? Further debate?

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): I am happy to rise to continue this debate. In his closing remarks the Attorney General indicated that this piece of legislation was part of the Ministry of the Attorney General's ongoing effort to improve the justice system. I must say that while this bill has some very strong points, one really wonders where the Attorney General has been when one looks at the justice system today. Has he forgotten that we have enormous court backlogs that have allowed innocent people not to receive justice in the system? We've seen individuals who have been released and accused of theft, of assault, of murder. Most recently, a 23-year-old girl was killed and her killer, a drunk driver, was let go because it took too long to get the case to court.

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The reality is that the case is taking too long because while we are building new courts, we're not staffing them with sufficient judges, we're not staffing them with sufficient prosecutors, and prosecutors find themselves now having to deal with many more complex cases for which they have neither the time nor the patience to deal with.

A most recent study indicated that crown prosecutors sometimes have less than five minutes to prepare for a case. Little wonder that we have such difficulties in the justice system. Little wonder that very serious cases are being plea-bargained down. This House has heard me on repeated occasions on the issue of plea bargaining and we have waited forever for the Attorney General to make good on his various promises to bring some rules and clarification to that area — all for naught.

Has he forgotten that the Family Responsibility Office, which he created, is in fact a sham, that we have women and children in this province who cannot get access to funds they need to get even the necessities of life?

Has he forgotten that the legal aid system is in a mess, that his very own appointed committee came back and said: "Look, 60% of the people who are under legal aid and come into family court should get legal aid but don't. They come unrepresented"?

It's a crime and it's a shame that the court system and the justice system in this province have fared in this way under this administration.

I don't want to belabour that point. I simply wanted to respond to the Ministry of the Attorney General and to the minister himself when he made those comments. The reality is that what we are talking about today is a piece of legislation that hopefully, when amended, will be a very strong piece of legislation.

Let me begin by congratulating the Law Society of Upper Canada for bringing forth amendments which in the main have been long overdue.

As you may know, the Law Society of Upper Canada is a very old institution. It celebrated its 200th anniversary

last year and it remains one of the world's oldest professional regulatory agencies.

The creation of this self-governing body by an act of our Legislature was an innovation in the English-speaking world which members may not be aware of, and it has become the model for law societies across our country.

The reason for the creation of the law society as set out in a statute of 1797 was to provide the province with "a learned and honourable body to assist their fellow subjects as occasion may require and to support and maintain the Constitution of said province."

In concrete terms, the mandate of the Law Society of Upper Canada was to see that persons seeking admission to the legal profession were competent and to ensure that lawyers followed proper procedures and behaved ethically. These goals are as important today as when they were enunciated 200 years ago when our predecessors first drafted the act, and these goals should continue to guide the debate today.

Of course the scale of the organization has changed. In 1797 we were talking about 15 lawyer members in Upper Canada. Now, of course, the society has become the largest bar in Canada with some 27,000 lawyers.

Since 1797 the law society has grown and evolved with the province and the country. It has maintained and expanded its responsibility for the training and competence of lawyers and for overseeing their professional conduct and ethics.

The contribution of the law society has not been limited to its actions as the governing body of the legal profession, nor has its influence been restricted solely in Ontario. Its members have been vital and active participants in the life of the country, many becoming national figures, such as our own Treasurer here today, in politics and in business, with others making their mark in such fields as the arts and sports.

One of the other functions of the law society over the years has been to deal with the public and it has accordingly greatly expanded its services to the people of Ontario. I think you will agree that a properly regulated profession means that the public can safely assume that their lawyers are competent and ethical.

With that in mind, certain services are designed specifically to assist and protect the public. For instance, the society maintains and administers funds to reimburse clients in the event of errors or dishonesty on the part of lawyers. Other programs include: dial-a-law, which provides legal information on a variety of topics; lawyer referral, which matches individuals with local lawyers with proper expertise; and the Law Foundation of Ontario, which funds legal education and the legal aid programs and administers the class proceedings fund.

The law society set a precedent in 1951 by providing for the first province-wide legal aid program in Canada.

Finally, the law society exists to govern the legal profession in the public interest by ensuring that the people of Ontario are served by lawyers who meet high standards of learning, competence and professional conduct and upholding the independence, integrity and honour

of the legal profession for the purpose of advancing the cause of justice and the rule of law.

I present that as an introduction because I think it's important to have a context. This is an organization that has stood the test of time, that has acted in the public interest since the beginning and that has at its heart the goal of providing a fair justice system.

We now turn to the act which is before us and the amendments which have been put forward by the law society. I think we have to agree that in the main the amendments are very good. Members will know that the last time the Law Society Act was amended was some 25 years ago, which I think many of us will say might have reflected a different time and sometimes even different priorities. Certainly one could not have anticipated the wide array of services that lawyers provide today and the kind of practices that they run today, nor could one have imagined the needs of the public as we now know them heading into the 21st century. What worked a quarter of a century ago has at times become obsolete, cumbersome and inefficient. But while we agree in general with most of the proposals of the bill, I think it's appropriate to say that we must be ever mindful of the goal of the law society and what it was created for.

Let me begin by outlining some of the positive elements we see in this particular legislation. I can agree with the Attorney General and my colleagues who have spoken before — and by the way, Speaker, I should tell you, since you are a new Speaker, that I'm splitting my time with the member for Kingston and The Islands and the member for Scarborough North.

I think the general overview of the bill is a positive one. I think the notion that we would increase the number of lay members to eight out of 48 is admirable, particularly since there is a vital public interest to be promoted.

The notion that we would have limited liability partnerships is a good one. We've done it in this House previously with the chartered accountants. We acknowledged the principle that it's important in order to be able to be competitive and responsible.

The notion that we would have a new complaints resolution commissioner — excellent. I must say it's kind of contradictory to what this government is doing in other areas where they're taking away complaints mechanisms, but I applaud the law society for insisting on this and obviously convincing the Attorney General that there is some merit in a public complaints process. Hopefully we will see that imported into other pieces of legislation.

The notion that the law society can impose some remedial measures to improve the lawyers' quality of service is to be commended. It's something that the profession can take some guidance on from the law society and I think it would be generally well received.

The fact that lawyers might apply centrally to administer and distribute unclaimed trust funds, with income from those funds being paid to the Law Foundation, is a fact of our times. It's a reality that we should recognize and there really is very little to say about that. It will be very efficient and in the public interest.

Codifying the policy requiring members who have not practised for a period of time so that they requalify — again, very important and something that I look forward to seeing in the future.

There are, of course, some issues that do give us pause and I guess it's on those that I want to focus for the remaining time. I will try and be as concise as possible.

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Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: This is an important bill and the member has a great deal of importance to say about it, but we don't appear to have a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Would you check to see if there's a quorum.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Downsview.

Ms Castrilli: As I was saying, while many people agree with the vast majority of the bill's proposals, there are some in the legal community who have voiced some concerns, and I'd like to raise some of those concerns. I know we will give it full attention at the hearings which I'm hopeful will take place following this debate.

In general, the concerns involve the following issues: There's an issue around privilege and confidentiality which the members opposite have tried to tackle; there's an issue with respect to investigation of members' conduct, how that's triggered and what develops following that; and there certainly is an issue with respect to the removal of the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in the event of conflict with this particular legislation. There is an additional issue which members of the opposition have heard about and that involves the power of the law society to publish legal cases, and the law book association members have in fact raised that. We will try and deal with some of those as quickly as we can, given the scope of our debate today.

Let me talk first about the notion of confidentiality and privilege. I think these are concerns that must be taken very seriously. In particular, I should say at the outset that the ones who have been voicing these concerns are members of the Canadian Bar Association — Ontario. I say they should be taken seriously because the CBAO represents some 15,000 of the 23,000 lawyers in Ontario and they have certainly been very vocal on the issues that we're about to address tonight.

I should also say that, in principle, the CBAO agrees with the thrust of the bill and the majority of its provisions, and what's at issue are the provisions I have just mentioned.

The CBAO first made its position known in letters to the law society. I refer in particular to a letter of September 3, 1998. There may have been others but this is the first that I have here. The CBAO clearly sets out its concerns, and I will read them into the record.

"The law society has the power to obtain information from members even if the information is contained in privileged or confidential documents.

"The law society can override the Statutory Powers Procedure Act through 'rules.'

"The law society has the power to order members to undergo medical or psychological examinations or treatment."

The letter goes on a great deal and talks about the public interest and whether those particular sections of the legislation respond to the public interest. The CBAO states quite clearly:

"The public interest is best served by striking the appropriate balance between the interest of the public in being protected from dishonest, incompetent or incapable lawyers and the interest of the public in protecting the right to confidential and privileged consultation with a member of an independent bar."

I think that's a point worth noting. This is not about trying to protect the dishonest lawyer. That lawyer, whoever he or she may be, should be subject to the full extent of the law. The issue is, do the amendments proposed here intrude on honest lawyers and do they intrude on the solicitor-client privilege that may be established between a particular lawyer and his or her clientele?

As you can imagine, the CBAO concludes that the balance has not been struck, that the powers proposed in the legislation are overly broad, that there is no reasonable test that is required under the legislation, and in particular that this is not a fair way to proceed with respect to members of the bar, particularly since minimum rules of procedure would not be able to be enforced in that particular case.

The letter was instructive because the bar association does not attempt to scuttle the entire bill. What they seek are amendments that require, upon investigation of a particular lawyer's conduct, that there be, first of all, reasonable grounds for investigating and, second, that there be procedures in place for the seizing of data from a particular law practice which do not infringe the privilege rule that has been the cornerstone of the legal profession, certainly during our generation.

The members of the Canadian Bar Association have made similar concerns to our Attorney General and I'd like to refer to a letter to the Attorney General from the president of the Canadian Bar Association — Ontario dated August 4, 1998, which states the problem starkly with respect to the solicitor-client privilege rule. They say:

"The seizing of innocent people's files and personal information is not a measure to protect the public. Section 49(3)(i) reads: '...information suggesting that a member may have engaged in professional misconduct...' will automatically trigger a mandatory investigation when the investigator has the power to 'enter a member's office' and 'require the production of, and examine any documents that relate to matters under investigation, including client files'...and ask 'the person under investigation and people who work with the person to provide information that relates to the matter under investigation...even if the

information or documents are privileged or confidential.” And they make reference to the subsections which in their view state what they have put forward.

The bar association then gets very specific in what that might mean in terms of individual practices, and that would be that the bill “would enable the law society to seize a member’s computer...and effectively shut down his/her business” in some cases, because so often in smaller practices it is the one hard drive that all the files are on, and, “These actions could be initiated without judicial scrutiny and without the minimum protection of a reasonable threshold.”

The concerns of the Canadian Bar Association have therefore been outstanding for some time and it’s kind of odd that we are coming to this with some very serious concerns which have not been dealt with. It would surprise no one that the CBAO passed a resolution at its meeting here in Toronto on Friday, June 19. I’d like to read that into the record in its entirety because I think it’s important that when 15,000 lawyers speak, we should at least take cognizance of that and debate the merits of their resolution.

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“Whereas the Canadian Bar Association — Ontario received in the fall of 1997 from the Law Society of Upper Canada a copy of the proposed amendments to the Law Society Act submitted to the Attorney General on December 3, 1996; and

“Whereas the Canadian Bar Association — Ontario has reviewed the proposed amendments and has identified provisions in part II of the act — discipline, incapacity, and professional — which impact on members’ rights to a fair hearing and other natural justice issues;

“Now therefore be it resolved that:

“1. The Law Society of Upper Canada be advised that the Canadian Bar Association — Ontario supports the proposed amendments to the Law Society Act in principle provided that the administrative law safeguards identified in appendix A are incorporated into the bill to be considered by the Legislature.” In appendix A are those amendments that I indicated to you were areas of particular concern around confidentiality and around investigation.

“2. The Law Society of Upper Canada be asked to consider adding to the amendment package an amendment to section 61 relating to the incorporation of law firms which would permit family members of lawyers to own shares in the law corporation.” That’s an additional matter that we will, I’m sure, deal with in the course of our debates.

Appendix A that the law society put forward has a whole series of issues they feel should be dealt with in order to strengthen the legislation, some 32 suggestions. I think those amendments have been sent to the Attorney General, and therefore it’s entirely curious that he wouldn’t have considered them as a serious matter for action.

One can say, looking at this: “Look, these are lawyers lobbying for lawyers. Aren’t they just being a little paranoid? Isn’t the real issue to protect the public from dishon-

est lawyers?” I think that is the real question. That’s precisely the question. You’re absolutely right.

To get a sense of how realistic the members of the Canadian Bar Association are being, we might look in other areas. One of the things we might look at is what happens in other professions with respect to investigations. Does one have to have some reasonable grounds for beginning an investigation, or is it something that is automatically done?

I have a whole list of Ontario statutes here in which the test of “reasonable and probable grounds” is required in connection with the regulation of professionals. It’s very instructive that we would have architects, health protection officials, the Ontario College of Teachers, professional engineers, real estate and business brokers, insurance brokers, health professionals in general, people who are engaged in the security industry, the travel industry — all of those statutes incorporate a “reasonable and probable grounds” test.

A good question to ask is, why doesn’t this apply to lawyers? Why would we change the Law Society Act and not enforce or protect that very reasonable test that obviously is the standard in many other professions? That’s a question that needs to be answered, and I’m looking forward to the hearings and to hearing what the responses will be with respect to that.

Another question that is raised with respect to solicitor-client privilege is, who has the right to determine an end to that privilege? It has long been argued that the privilege is not the privilege of the lawyer; it is the privilege of the client. That is, if anybody comes in and scoops your hard drive and takes away your clients’ files, the lawyer can’t consent to releasing that information if it’s privileged. Only the client can do that.

I think the case law is pretty clear on that, but in the event that anyone should need any further assistance, we’ve had a very interesting case just recently on that very point. The case re Lavallee, Rackel and Heintz et al and Attorney of Canada, with the Law Society of Alberta as an intervener, proved very clearly that it is the client who has the privilege, and that cannot be relinquished by a lawyer. In fact the justice in that case had some very harsh things to say about privilege. I think again it’s worthy of note.

Madam Justice Joanne Veit said, “A client’s legal right to have privileged communications with a lawyer and a client’s constitutional right to be protected against unreasonable search and seizures can be stripped from the client without the client ever realizing this has happened.” That’s what the particular case dealt with.

She goes on to say that transferring the right to enforce a privilege claim from a client to a lawyer simply wasn’t good enough.

“It is an expropriation of a right. It is analogous to a situation in which Parliament would take away from a mentally and physically healthy adult Canadian the right to make their own decisions about health care and give that right to doctors or priests or people who own gas stations.”

I think that makes the point very forcefully that it's not a principle that's to be abrogated from.

There is ample evidence from the profession itself about some of the problems with this particular piece of legislation. While I won't bring to the attention of the House all the many letters that I and others have received with respect to that, I think there's one that bears noting. It's a very compelling letter and a very eloquent letter written by the law firm of Paroian, Raphael in the Windsor area. There is some commonality to all of the comments that we've heard, that is, everybody agrees that it's time for changes in the Law Society Act and everybody agrees that the law society has a central role to play in governing the profession.

The points made by the writer in this particular case are the following. The first point they make is that there really hasn't been sufficient consultation with the profession. Again, I will simply read what the writer has to say.

"I agree that the law society exists to govern the profession in public interest.... Having said that, in today's society the governed have some expectation of consultations and a hearing by the governors."

I think it's interesting that we're going to hearings because there are certainly some elements of the profession who believe they have not been sufficiently involved in the discussion and the hearings we will have will give that opportunity to those who want to be heard.

The second point the writer makes is:

"The law society appears to propose, in the guise of protecting the public, to set aside solicitor and client privilege, the most revered arrangement in our society. The bill appears to allow some suspension of the rules of natural justice by allowing the law society to set its own rules concerning investigations.

"All of the usual protections afforded by the law to even the most unsavoury of accused in criminal matters would seem to be not applicable to lawyers with respect to the subject of an investigation by their governing body."

I read this because it's not atypical of the many letters that we've had, and the request in each case has been to suspend the particular legislation until such time as matters have been dealt with. I know there have been some meetings between the Canadian Bar Association and the law society and hopefully these issues will have been discussed between them and will be brought up again during the hearings that we will have.

I think the most interesting letter that we have received and the one that we really must pay attention to — it's not just a question of individual lawyers who are concerned about this — but the privacy commissioner of Ontario is sufficiently concerned as to respond in a letter of which I have a copy, a letter dated October 2, 1998. It might interest members to know precisely what it is that the privacy commissioner has said.

The first thing that the privacy commissioner advocates is:

"The bill should contain a provision recognizing that each law society investigation should collect only what personal information is authorized by the statute and

which it anticipates is reasonably required in the particular circumstances. The bill should also provide for the secure and confidential retention, use and disposal of such personal information.

"Secondly, the bill should give the law society flexibility regarding whether or not to investigate and to determine the nature of the investigation." In other words, the particular sections of the act that are mandatory should be permissive.

Also, the commissioner recommends that the section dealing with assessing a member or student capacity should have a stronger test. The proposal is that the hearing panel, which is defined in the bill, "be required to have reasonable and probable grounds before ordering a medical or psychological examination to determine a member's capacity." A member or student "should be able to make submissions on the issue before he or she is required to be examined."

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Similar standards, according to the commissioner, should be met before a member is required to undergo "testing and treatment for addiction."

The next point they make is that there should be a determination at some stage in an investigation that the clients of an investigated member are informed and involved in the process. "If the audit leads to disciplinary proceedings against a member in which a client's file will be used in evidence, the client should be at least notified," which is currently not required under the statute. "Consideration should also be given to anonymizing client information when it is used in discipline proceedings."

An additional concern of the commission is that because of the society's power to examine client files, it might be a good idea if members routinely informed clients of the society's right of access to members' files:

"The bill should require that information collected...should be used only for the intended purpose" of the investigation "and not for any other secondary purposes." "The Law Society, hearing panel or...investigators shall not...disclose the information...except for the purposes of the authorizing legislation."

With respect to seizing computer files, the privacy commissioner would like to see a provision that ensures that only the information that investigators require is "viewed, collected and used." Thus, "It would require the investigator to have access only to the part of the record which is required."

"Finally," according to the commissioner, "the disclosure of personal information in contravention of the Law Society Act should be made an offence which is subject to a described penalty."

The Attorney General is in possession of this letter of the privacy commissioner. It was shared with him. I think it's intended to be a constructive view of the legislation and is intended to bring some light on these very complicated issues before us today.

There is one additional issue which I'd like to raise, which has been raised by another sector. Not the CBAO and not the privacy commissioner but the law book com-

panies have met and are concerned about subsection 29(1) of the legislation. The gist of their concern is that the Law Society, by virtue of this legislation, would be creating, in their words, "a publishing monopoly controlled by the Law Society of Upper Canada." I think it will be very useful to hear from them during the course of our hearing as to how this problem can be dealt with. From their perspective, the current legislation gives the Law Society a monopoly over the publication of court cases. The president of Canada Law Book writes:

"As an industry, legal publishers employ some 1,500 individuals in Canada and have annual sales of legal publications in all formats which are estimated to be in the range of \$150 million. The importance of the access to and the publication and distribution of judicial decisions to the health of this industry cannot be overestimated."

We have questions of some significance with respect to this particular legislation which truly need to be dealt with. I think the hearings themselves will provide an opportunity for us to deal with that.

Because we have agreed that we will have hearings, we'll be able to discuss in detail some of the amendments that should be put forward, but clearly there are a number of issues that have to be dealt with. I will be very interested in the debate that takes place. I want to give the Attorney General some notification that we will be putting forward amendments to deal with some of these substantive issues that we've dealt with today.

Let me conclude by saying this: On the whole, the Law Society Amendment Act is timely and good legislation. It responds to some very real needs in our society as changes have taken place over the last 25 years. It speaks to the role of the law society in ensuring that it is up to date, that it can be efficient in the governance of the profession.

However, it must also be said that the deficiencies of this legislation, however few, are substantive. They cannot be ignored. They must be dealt with. Moreover, there have been allegations that those deficiencies are against the public interest. They're perceived that way for two reasons: firstly, because they may subject honest lawyers to extraordinary processes without reasonable grounds, something that's not required of other professions; and secondly, they can breach the rights of uninvolved clients to have their communication with their lawyer covered by privilege. This is an unwarranted and unacceptable intrusion which, if not rectified, will undermine the integrity of our system of justice.

Let's be clear again: We're not talking about dishonest lawyers; we're not talking about looser guidelines with respect to that. There is no question that dishonest lawyers should be dealt with to the full extent of the law. What we are talking about is protecting the public interest, a goal which I know the Law Society of Upper Canada, the Canadian Bar Association and the individual members of the profession cherish.

Let me conclude by quoting from the Law Society itself. It has published a very interesting publication, which I recommend to all of you, called *Governing in the*

Public Interest, which is its mandate. The very first page says:

"The Law Society of Upper Canada has maintained its leadership status as one of the world's oldest professional regulatory agencies by anticipating changing consumer needs and expectations and evolving to meet them. An amended Law Society Act offers a variety of benefits, but they all really come down to helping the society fulfill its role of protecting the public from bad lawyers and of making sure the Ontario bar provides the public with excellent service."

Let me paraphrase another paragraph in this publication and say that I agree with the Law Society that an amended act will increase public confidence that Ontario's lawyers will be directed to meet and exceed the highest quality of professional standards. There's no question that we all agree with those sentences, and it's a noble mandate that the law society continues to have for itself.

I urge the government not to act hastily. I'm delighted this bill is being sent to committee, where it can be amended. It's important that we bring our full attention to those amendments when we finally meet; to do otherwise would not only make a good bill unpalatable, but would seriously compromise the public interest in Ontario.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I will just take a few minutes to make some points that I think need to be said, especially the fact that I don't come from the discipline of law, as a lawyer. But I want to make a couple of points here, so therefore I welcome this opportunity.

I understand too that amendments have not been made to this act for the last 25 years, yet the organization positions itself as being prepared for changes and ready to make these changes. That in itself, that after 25 years there have been no changes to the act, tells us we are not responding at all to the sort of cultural diversity, the types of laws and new things that change along the way for that sort of profession. So I do welcome this change. As a matter of fact, I would support any changes that improve efficiency and accountability. God knows it needs a lot of change within that system.

I have become extremely leery about lawyers in the sense that many times clients will come to me in my constituency office, having been referred, having gone to their lawyers. There are too many complaints about the unprofessional way in which they have done things. I'm not talking about the good lawyers, because I presume the good lawyers are not the ones that get complained about. But I find too often that I'm getting complaints about how lawyers have conducted themselves. Some, to me, conduct themselves like one size fits all. You go to a lawyer and, whatever it is, "I'll defend you." The fact is that somehow the service is not done in a very professional and efficient manner.

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I, for one, also believe that the justice system has failed us, has failed many of the people who are not able to afford justice, because it's a very expensive system. The poor are denied proper representation through the justice system. Many cases have come to me where constituents

have been asked to plead guilty when they are not guilty so that they hurry the case along. The fact is that it haunts them for years and years to come about things they were not guilty about because the system itself failed.

While I welcome these changes, I hope the law society will also urge this government to put in more money in the sense that we have more prosecutors in the courts, we have more courthouses and justice can be served. Justice that has been delayed for individuals is justice denied. Those who don't have the money are somehow denied all of that. Too often lawyers ask, "Show me your bank account and I'll tell you how I can defend you." The fact is, as soon as they see that the bank account is not extensive, somehow they can't be bothered.

I would say to lawyers that of course they can't provide their service for free, because the government itself, this government, has starved the legal aid system until now they have passed it over to a private system where they'd have to go seeking money in order to fund it. I just hope that justice could be served to those individuals.

I will be making a couple of points and I want my colleague to put many things on the record itself. Let me just talk a little bit about some of the law students, students who have law degrees and who are finding it extremely difficult to get any articling at all to enter the profession. The system itself and the association seem to be so close-knit as to who should come in and where they should practise that this diverse community — and let me be very direct. Many black law students with degrees are not able to get into some law firms to practise to be lawyers. They need that, because the sensitivity of that close-knit society needs those black individuals there. More must be done, and I want the government to look at all that. That is why access to many of these professions is being denied, because of those individuals who have decided, "This is our territory and we will tell you who will come in, how they will look and what they will look like." It is bad.

We in this society can't go bragging around the world that it's the greatest place to live when some of us are in the worst place to work or the worst place to practise our profession. Not all of us are like that. As I said, while I welcome the changes here and I applaud the minister — and the law society as a matter of fact, which more than anyone else encouraged these changes — I think it's just inadequate to make the kinds of changes that are necessary for people in our society to get justice to be levied in a manner that they can feel is fair and protective.

I encourage the government, furthermore, to put some money into the system, where we can have more prosecutors, where we can have courthouses where this justice can be levied properly.

I just want to make those few comments and thank you very much for allowing me to do this.

Mr Gerretsen: I too am very pleased to join this debate on this important issue. Before doing so, however, there are two or three other things I want to talk about directly within the purview of the Attorney General's department.

If this Attorney General can be faulted for two areas, it is first of all his failure to call for a public inquiry into what happened in September 1995 at Ipperwash. Surely that's his responsibility. It was the first time in this century that a member of the First Nations lost his life. There have been numerous questions raised in this House, and for the life of me we cannot understand why he has not called for a public inquiry into that matter. That's his first big failing.

His second big failing is the continuing chaos that prevails within the Family Responsibility Office. In my own office and in the offices of many other members the number one issue that is being dealt with by our staffs on a day-to-day basis deals with Family Responsibility Office matters. I had one staff work on nothing but trying to clear up cases and situations where money was paid into the system by husbands or wives for the benefit of their children and for the benefit of their spouses etc where it took literally months to get that money out of the system the other way. I hold the Attorney General and his department fully responsible for that.

You may recall that at one time we had a system where we had regional offices, where the matter was dealt with a heck of a lot quicker. When orders were made against parents for support for their spouses or their children, the idea was that the money be paid into a court office so that it could be paid out to the other spouse entitled to that money for the benefit of herself, in most cases, and her children as quickly as possible. The chaos that this Attorney General has caused by, in effect, getting rid of all the regional offices and having it all centralized here at Downsview in Toronto is absolutely unacceptable.

You may recall that a couple of members of this House even got into some difficulty in trying to rectify that situation. I give them full credit for that, because the women and children who rely on that support are crying out for help in that area. This Attorney General has done precious little to help that situation, so I once again urge him — I'm very pleased to see him here in the House this afternoon — to deal with that matter and deal with it effectively. If you need more resources to ensure that support payments that are being paid into the system are being paid out as quickly as possible to those people who are entitled to them and those people who need those funds in order to live their daily lives, then I for one — and I'm sure I speak on behalf of my caucus — will totally support you in that regard, because the current situation that exists there is totally unacceptable.

The other issue that is also a shameful situation is what has happened to legal aid in this province. I've got a report here from the law society that has been out for some time now that shows you what has happened to the legal aid system. I know that with this new bill that was introduced a couple of days ago we're going into a system now where basically the legal aid system will be run separate and apart from the law society, but the real problem is not so much who runs the system but whether the system is adequately funded. If you look at the report from the law society and you look at the number of certificates issued,

for example, in 1992-93, when there were over 230,000 legal aid certificates issued, and last year, when there were 80,000 legal aid certificates issued, a drop of 200% — they've been cut right down to a third — you can see there's been a real problem.

I know my friends on the other side will say, "Maybe there were a lot of people who were getting legal aid certificates who shouldn't have been entitled thereto," and I say to you, you are wrong. Walk into any family court building in this province and find out how many women, basically women but also men at times, are unrepresented when they go into a family court setting where decisions are being made very quickly as to how much support they should have, who should have custody and access to children etc, and you quickly realize that there is something wrong with our system. Where at one time we had a system where these people were properly represented, now a lot of them are doing it on their own, because they are simply not getting the legal aid certificates any more for those kinds of situations. I think that's a shame in our society.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Maybe you might just confirm for me that the debate today is on Bill 53. I'm not sure that it makes a lot of reference to legal aid issues, so you might rule as to whether the speaker in fact is addressing the legislation before the House.

The Deputy Speaker: It is Bill 53?

Mr Gerretsen: I am dealing with Bill 53. The Attorney General himself, in his own words today, said that this was part of a system. He wanted to implement these new provisions to the Law Society Act so that the provision of justice to Ontarians could be improved.

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What I'm saying is that here is a particular case where we have fallen short and where he's not doing anything about it. The system is completely underfunded. The number of certificates that have been issued has dropped by two thirds from where they were two or three years ago. At one time we used to pride ourselves on the fact that people who went to court in Ontario could get representation from a lawyer. Yes, it costs some money and, yes, there may have been the odd case where the system was abused. I don't disagree with that for a moment. But we have now slipped into a system where many of the poorest people, the people with the greatest need who are involved in court situations, many times not of their own doing, are totally unrepresented. I think that is totally unacceptable in a modern society that we have here in Canada in the 1990s. We should be progressing in our society, we shouldn't be retracting, and that's what's happening.

If the members of the government don't want to hear that, then I would suggest to them that they walk into any family courtroom or any family court building when the courts are open during the day and find out how the individuals, who maybe for the first time in their lives are involved with the system, feel about it and how totally alone they are. They cannot get adequate representation because they cannot afford to pay for a lawyer and be-

cause they cannot get the legal aid certificates. The law society report clearly deals with that, so I hope that the Attorney General will deal with that aspect as well.

As a matter of fact, the number of applications that have been refused, according to the law society's own report, has grown dramatically from 14% in 1992-93 to some 29% thereafter.

Hon Mr Harnick: So what's the Liberal plan to clear it up? Tell us about it.

Mr Gerretsen: I know the Attorney General doesn't want to hear this. He knows I'm hitting a sore spot and he's asking me what our policies are.

Hon Mr Harnick: Do you have any? You have none, right?

Mr Gerretsen: To be quite frank, what our policies are is totally immaterial. It is your government that put this plan at risk. You underfunded it.

Hon Mr Harnick: You've got none on employment insurance. You've got nothing.

Mr Gerretsen: You underfunded the system and you continue to attack the poor in this province, sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Willowdale, come to order, please.

Mr Gerretsen: The moment you take that responsibility seriously and speak around the cabinet table and say, "We have to fund the legal aid system in Ontario adequately," then I will change my mind and I'll say you've done your job. So far, you, sir, have not done your job in that regard.

The other challenge I throw out is to the law society. I see the treasurer is here today. In 1988-89 a report was done on access to professions and trades. I'm a lawyer myself and I know there's a tendency in all of us to protect our own turf. We've seen that in just about every trade and profession. We all like to protect our own turf and we sure aren't making it easy for people to get into a profession.

I challenge the law society to take a close look at itself. When people come in from other countries who have the proper qualifications, let us make sure they can get access and become fully licensed practising lawyers in this province as soon as possible. Let us not put other obstacles in their way to not make it happen. This is not only a problem with the Law Society, it's a problem with the medical society, it's a problem with many of the trades and professions in this province.

If we truly want to be a compassionate society in which we welcome people from other countries, then I think we should make it so that all these people, if they have the right and proper qualifications, can be admitted into the different trades and professions as soon as possible. I think we all need to take a look at our own situation and deal with it as quickly as possible.

Let me just say it is certainly interesting to see that on a bill which I think everybody thought was going to be passed relatively quickly — of course, I couldn't understand why the member for York East was filibustering his own bill there earlier on, but maybe there's something about this bill he didn't like — but a bill that was rela-

tively innocuous and that we all support in principle, how much reaction there is from the government side when we point out some issues that are closely related to this bill, that are part of this minister's own ministry and that he talked about. He's the one who raised the issue about making the administration of justice more equitable and improving it in this province. So if he somehow finds any difficulty with what I'm saying, I'd like him to correct me in that respect.

Hon Mr Harnick: We are waiting for your constructive advice.

Mr Gerretsen: I'm always constructive, sir. What I'm telling you is, simply, to do something about the Family Responsibility Office. I don't think the constituency office that each one of us operates in our own riding ought to be made into an office where family responsibility matters are dealt with.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Again the member for Kingston and The Islands is acting in a most unparliamentary manner. He is not sticking to the subject at hand and the bill before us, and I'd ask the Speaker to ensure that he does so.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of order and I'll mention it. To the member for Kingston and The Islands, I'd like you to bring your debate within the confines of Bill 53.

Mr Gerretsen: I will certainly do that, Mr Speaker. My apologies to the crime commissioner there. I didn't quite recognize him since he's not wearing his trench coat, but my apologies to him. I was just responding to a question posed to me by the Attorney General.

Mr Martiniuk: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I believe I am to be referred to as the member for Cambridge and in no other manner in this House. Could you please again correct the member for Kingston and The Islands.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of order. I would like to remind you that we refer to members by their ridings.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will no longer refer to the member as the crime commissioner; I will refer to him as the member for Cambridge. Cambridge is a beautiful community that I've had an opportunity to visit many, many times. I did not realize that the member was not proud of the fact that he is a crime commissioner, but I will never refer to him in that light again.

Hon Mr Harnick: Gerretsen, put your hand on your nose and let a little air out of your head.

Mr Gerretsen: I was just listening to the chatter from the Attorney General. It's nice to see you in the House this afternoon. I hope you're taking in the debate.

Hon Mr Harnick: It's nice to be here to listen to these pearls of wisdom that you are providing us with.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you.

Hon Mr Harnick: Now tell me, have you read the bill? Tell the people watching, have you read the bill?

Mr Gerretsen: I have read the bill, and I am just saying to you that there's so much other work that you could be doing to improve access to justice in this province.

I would just ask the Attorney General, as a final matter, to take very seriously the content that's contained in the letter of October 2, 1998, from the Information and Privacy Commissioner. He makes four or five good recommendations in there, certainly amendments that ought to be made to this bill to make it a better bill for everyone; not just for the members of the law society but for everyone in Ontario.

With that, I will yield the rest of my time so that the third party can have an adequate turn as well.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in her office.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

Bill 63, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to instructional time / Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne les heures d'enseignement.

LAW SOCIETY AMENDMENT ACT, 1998 LOI DE 1998 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE BARREAU

(continued)

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): First, let me indicate that I want to share this time with Ms Boyd, who has some very important things to say about Bill 53.

Let me tell you right at the outset that the New Democratic Party caucus is supporting this bill on second reading. We're eager to see it receive second reading. We acknowledge that it came about as a result of some long-time initiative on the part of the law society, that the thrust of the bill is to improve the capacity, the ability of the law society to regulate, hopefully, bad lawyers in the profession.

I want to tell you as well that we're well aware of the concerns that have been raised by the Canadian Bar Association — Ontario, which have been articulated in a number of ways, I believe, to all members of the Legislature, and the concerns raised by the publishing company, Canada Law Book. I have a copy of the letter from Stuart Morrison to the Attorney General dated October 2. I hope the Attorney General enjoyed the brandies and the cigars that the publishers of Canada Law Book make reference to there. It's interesting they refer in the first paragraph of the letter to the Attorney General from Stuart Morrison —

Hon Mr Harnick: You'll notice it didn't make me capitulate, Peter.

Mr Kormos: It's interesting how cigars just happen to appear in political circles in the recent past and now they're a part of the Attorney General's circle. It's just an observation on my part.

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I should tell you that the law society, in its lobby efforts — and no two ways about it, it's engaged in lobby efforts. The treasurer of the law society is here today, somewhat peripatetic. He started up there in the visitors' gallery. He came down to the opposition galleries and was quickly escorted over to the government gallery. There remains the Speaker's gallery and the east visitors' gallery for him to sit in — he'll have covered all of the viewpoints available to him there — or the press gallery, if he's so inclined. As I said, the somehow peripatetic treasurer of the law society.

I come from a part of the province, Niagara region, that has quite frankly some very skilled and competent members of the bar. We're very fortunate down there. At the same time, my constituency office has received on a more than infrequent basis concerns by, let's call them consumers, people in the community, about how they've been dealt with by lawyers, and concerns about how the law society has responded to their complaints.

The complaints procedure has been quite frankly rather intimidating and inaccessible for a lot of people down where I come from. A whole lot of these people, when they submit a complaint — I'll be quite candid, my office has assisted them in the course of doing that, no two ways about it — and they wait what seems like an incredibly lengthy period of time and they receive a rather terse response from the law society, they're quite frustrated. They're in fact disappointed that they haven't been made a part of the process, that they haven't been kept informed during the course of, let's say, an investigation, haven't been advised as thoroughly as they ought to have been of the facts that the law society's investigators relied upon in reaching their conclusions. Obviously you're talking about a former client who's disappointed because the law society has not upheld their complaint or has not acted in what they see to be an appropriate way on that complaint.

The complaints review commissioner, the CRC, proposed by this legislation I anticipate will, in an almost ombudsman-like role, be a more accessible arena for people with complaints.

The lack of appeal process is interesting and causes me some concern because my impression from reading the legislation is that the decision of the CRC is final, that an appeal is precluded. That leaves people unsatisfied with the disposition by the CRC frustrated, and it creates new barriers, new thresholds, when they thought they were entering a process that had a much lower threshold and that was far more consumer-friendly.

Perhaps that will be addressed during the course of brief committee hearings because, yes, we in the New Democratic Party very much expect and call upon the government to have sufficient committee hearings. They don't have to be a lengthy period of hearings, but sufficient to hear the concerns of the Canadian Bar Associa-

tion, of, yes, even Canada Law Book publishers, their concern effectively about the copyright control that they interpret the act as giving the law society —

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: They do. The fact is they've raised that issue. Far be it from me to prejudge the issue. They've raised that issue and it has to be addressed. As well, let's understand that organizations like the CBA are more than capable of presenting written submissions in an articulate and comprehensive way. I expect there would be a whole lot of people in this province who would want to talk to a committee, under the scope of a committee review of Bill 53, about their grievances and complaints about the law profession in general.

There's an increasingly Shakespearean view of lawyers here in the province and I think I understand the reasons for that concern on the part of the public. I've seen, sadly, some of the gouging, some of the work that's been taken on by lawyers who ought not to be doing that kind of work, who then leave clients high and dry when they find themselves without results and with their bank accounts emptied. I have some great concerns about that.

I'm hopeful that the Law Society Act amendments, Bill 53, with it addressing issues of upgrading and retraining on the part of lawyers, are going to go some way towards resolving that, and providing for a broader range or a broader variety of oversight roles will make the profession more responsive to the needs of consumers, not just here in Toronto but in small-town Ontario as well.

I told you Ms Boyd is going to be speaking to this and she has some historical observations she wants to make and will be commenting further. I indicate that we support the legislation, that we are very prepared, notwithstanding the limited time we've had and will have to address this, to have this go to a vote for second reading today, expecting very much, insisting, that it receive committee hearings, perhaps two days of that, and I'd suggest to the government one day of clause-by-clause so that the submissions —

Hon Mr Harnick: Agreed.

Mr Kormos: The Attorney General agreed with me for the first time in three years and change. It's been a long time since he agreed with me about almost anything. As a matter of fact, the last time he agreed with me was when I was advocating public auto insurance here in this chamber. He agreed with me. He was sitting up there in the visitors' gallery cheering us on when we were fighting for public auto insurance and the right of innocent victims to sue.

Hon Mr Harnick: It wasn't quite that way, Peter.

Mr Kormos: That's a distant memory now. A lot of water has gone under the bridge and there have been some bridges burnt. But then again it's been a good year and a half, two years, since he's arrested me, so who am I to complain? Perhaps we've reached a new rapport. Then again perhaps there'll be a paddy wagon waiting for me as I exit the Legislative Building tonight at 6. Who knows? This government is so unpredictable in that regard and quite frankly at times can be outright sinister.

I should mention that I wasn't here yesterday and I apologize to you, Speaker. But what I'd done, I was down in E.L. Crossley Secondary School and I spoke with, among others, one of their law teachers. I explained we had Bill 53 coming up this afternoon and that we'd be debating it. I spent a day with teachers at E.L. Crossley Secondary School. It was an invitation offered by OSSTF in Niagara region, calling upon MPPs to spend the day in the classroom with teachers from the beginning of their work day through to the end of their classroom workday.

I acknowledge I got to leave around 4 or 4:15. Teachers whom I was with all day were still at the school, notwithstanding all the students had left, and were packaging up work to take home, be it preparing for the next day's classes, be it marking essays or tests. I should tell you, if you had had the chance to go to E.L. Crossley Secondary School with me down on Highway 20 in Pelham, you would have been impressed, as I was, by the student body, a bright group of young people, an incredibly impressive group of young people, incredibly frustrated by the cut-backs in education, by the defunding of education by this government and by the impact it's had on their classroom size — enormous classrooms: more students, fewer teachers.

I just want to indicate to you that's why I wasn't able to be here yesterday. I was with John Ruscitti, who's a teacher at E.L. Crossley, and with Dan Peat, another teacher there. I should mention the principal, Randy Daly. His staff and his student body exhibited great hospitality and generosity of spirit towards me. I met with the students, with the staff, the teaching staff as well as non-teaching staff, very much a part of the educational family there, Patricia King and her colleagues, and the custodial staff, who raised great concerns about what's happening to them and their responsibilities, and as well with the office staff.

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I think those young people would be very interested in having their concerns expressed here in this Legislature at the earliest opportunity, so I bent the rules a little bit, Speaker. I've been speaking for a few seconds off topic, off Bill 53, but I bent the rules because you understand how urgent it is for those young people, bright, capable young people with promising futures were it not for the incredible attack on public funding of education. You understand how eager they would be to have me indicate that I was with them yesterday and indicate some of their concerns to this Legislature.

The law society, as I indicated earlier, has lobbied hard to try to ensure that this bill becomes law. I understand that. They have responded, for instance, to the concerns raised by the CBAO, and again I'm sure everybody is well aware of the responses the Law Society provided. In understanding that the CBAO comes at this from the point of view of a lobby group, as they would want themselves to be perceived to be on behalf of the lawyers themselves or the profession — and perhaps not all lawyers, but I would hope that the government would give some serious consid-

eration to the concerns raised and would consider recommendations when it comes to amendments.

We welcome the increase in lay benchers. I think that's incredibly important. We note that they're still going to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and there's not a protocol indicated in the act that, for instance, requires — but the government ignores that anyway. I'm making reference to bodies which have a responsibility to recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, to the cabinet, appropriate candidates for appointment, but for three years the government has overlooked those in any event. Look what they've done to district health councils, for instance, among others.

I would have preferred that there were some indication in the legislation that would indicate how the government is to receive applicants for those positions as lay members of the law society. That's an incredibly important point. Otherwise, the government can simply pork barrel yet again, and we won't give effect to the intent that's I'm sure inherent in the expansion of lay members.

I also want the law society to be incredibly conscious and aware — and I think they are, but they haven't demonstrated it — of the fact that a whole lot of people who make complaints about their treatment or maltreatment by lawyers, as they understand it — I've seen some of these, and I'm convinced that there have been some very serious and valid complaints made to the law society. They may not involve millions and millions of dollars; they may involve what in relative terms is a relatively small amount of money. But a whole lot of these people are not professionals. I mean, they had to go to a lawyer in the first place. They thought they were going to be taken care of. They don't feel capable of participating in a forum as august as the law society, they don't feel that they're on a level playing field and they've been kept in the dark about the progress of investigations and about the findings that were made which resulted in the conclusions drawn by investigators and the rationale for either referral or non-referral to disciplinary proceedings.

I think that process has to be made far more transparent. In fact, the law society may well entertain the prospect of having among its staff what I might call para-advocates for people who want to make a complaint. Some people find their way to our constituency office. Others find their way to other lawyers' offices. Lawyers are very reluctant to assist in the preparation of a complaint. You know that. So they find their way to perhaps a friend's home or to a constituency office, but more often than not they don't get any assistance whatsoever.

The law society might be well advised to entertain the prospect of making available staff to people who want to make a complaint, to assist them in literally putting it down on paper, putting it down in a concise and appropriate way so that it can be dealt with in the manner the law society deals with things, that legalistic style. People are incredibly intimidated by the process. I appreciate the law society's listing is in the phone book, in the yellow pages, along with lawyers' referrals. We still get calls.

I had a conversation just last night at an event in St Catharines with somebody, "How do I get a hold of the law society?" The law society hasn't done a very good job of advertising its presence to the public out there, to regular folks, to the type of people who live in Welland, Thorold, Pelham, anywhere here in the province. I think the law society should direct some of its energy to advertising its presence, to advertising the means by which persons can make complaints about the legal profession.

I could get some lawyers calling me promptly, mad as all get out because it might interrupt the decor of their oak-panelled reception rooms, but I, quite frankly, am not adverse to a proposition that lawyers in their offices be required to provide information about accessing the law society. The Motor Vehicle Repair Act does that to motor vehicle repair shops. It's compulsory. Mind you, I tried to turn a guy in down in London after I got a complaint about one rip-off artist down in London who was towing cars and then literally stealing them. It's true. I went down there. Honest, I drove to London. I got a complaint from a London resident that his car had been stolen by a towing company. They towed it and then ripped him off. The car is gone. I did a paper chase of it and it's gone through three or four hands by now.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): That's what you call full service.

Mr Kormos: Yes. As Mr Silipo says, "That's what you call full service."

I went down there. I wanted to burn this guy good. He didn't know why I was there. I took a look at his shop, and among other things he didn't have the sign, the posting that was necessary under the Motor Vehicle Repair Act. I thought, "You SOB, I'll burn you on that one." I called the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations and all you get is voice mail. Finally, after a day and a half of tracking down somebody who calls themselves an investigator, I got the head of investigations, who identified herself as the only person who does it and she talked about mediation. We're beyond the point of mediation. I wanted the guy busted. I wanted him prosecuted. I said: "I'm your chief witness. You don't have to investigate. I'll testify. I went there. It wasn't there." So much for the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. But let that be an example, quite frankly, to the law society.

People have to understand that not only is there a right to complain and a right to enter a process, but people have to understand that if they don't feel comfortable doing that unaccompanied or unassisted, there's going to be some assistance offered to them. It's as simple as that. I urge the law society, if they're going to give effect to the intent of this bill, to implement a user-friendly process and design.

I conclude with that and yield the floor to Ms Boyd, who will speak to Bill 53 as well. I thank the law society for their persistence. I should tell Mr Strosberg that I'm not a cigar smoker but I have many friends who are, and they prefer Romeo y Julietas, Cuban, not Dominican Republic, and they'd be more than pleased to be the beneficiary of his generosity and largesse.

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Mrs Boyd: I would say the member for Welland-Thorold gives a whole new vision to what the process of lobbying really is all about.

I wanted very much to speak to this bill, because as the first layperson, or effectively the first layperson to have been an Attorney General in Ontario, one of the things that was closest to my heart was the efforts that were being made by the law society to revamp its processes to make them more friendly to the consumer, to try and look at the whole process of discipline, the process of working in the public interest around issues that face the practice of law in Ontario, and in fact on streamlining its management and some of its administrative duties.

When I first became Attorney General and the treasurer of the law society was one Allan Rock, the process had already been underway for some time. There had been a good deal of examination around what worked and what didn't work in terms of the public view of the whole process within the law society. There was a recognition that there wasn't a lot of public confidence in the ability of the law society to self-regulate in an open enough way to convince the consuming public that they took very seriously their duty to always act in the public interest.

I know as an Attorney General, and I'm sure every Attorney General receives complaints about lawyers, which of course it's the duty of an Attorney General to refer to the law society, that some of the complaints were clearly complaints that had been hanging on for a long time, where the processes that were followed by the law society were not yielding the kind of quick justice that I think these amendments will help to ensure.

One of the major issues that we find in terms of disagreement with the decisions of the law society has come from the Canadian Bar Association and its Ontario branch. The concern seems to centre primarily around the issue of the powers the law society would have to investigate lawyers, to look at the records in a lawyer's office, to have access to those records. The concern seems to centre around a perception that the powers the law society would have under this act somehow are a violation of client privilege in terms of the law profession.

I would like to read into the record a letter to the editor of the Law Times from one Clayton Ruby, who is certainly known to all of us to be extraordinarily protective of the whole issue of client-solicitor privilege, extremely careful around the issue of search and seizure procedures, who probably has done more work to ensure that the principles enshrined in those two items are maintained, and someone who practices as a criminal lawyer, someone who is very clear about the need to ensure that nothing we do infringes on the privacy of clients or destroys that client privilege. Therefore it's interesting to find Clayton Ruby coming down directly on the side of the law society and these changes, so I'm going to read it into the record. It's entitled "Take a Close Look."

"CBAO president Bill Simpson claims the powers given the law society to investigate crooked, dishonest and

incompetent lawyers are 'excessive.' In an editorial, *Law Times* agrees.

"Take a close look at the 20th century. There are hundreds of examples in administrative contexts and regulated fields such as the legal profession where entry during regular business hours to examine documents and require their production without judicial authorization is today a routine part of any effective regulation process.

"There is simply no reason why lawyers should have a special exemption from effective scrutiny by their own regulatory body.

"And 20 years ago the power to require the production of documents was sufficient — because that's what lawyers used. Today the power to copy files in a computer is essential.

"As Bill Simpson must know, no solicitor-client privilege exists if a lawyer is being used in or engages in any kind of criminal activity or fraud. There is never a legal professional privilege for such documents. But privilege continues for others, even if the law society examines them.

"As the Supreme Court of Canada has made clear, in examining charter applications, judicial authorization based on reasonable and probable grounds is required in the criminal context — not in the regulatory context.

"If we are to fulfil our obligations to the public, who all too often suspect that lawyers are crooked and dishonest, we must act responsibly and stop short-sighted claims to special privilege.

"Nothing is more certain to bring the profession into disrepute."

I may say that I agree absolutely that it is essential to the public's understanding of what these changes are that the public be reassured, as the law society has repeatedly tried to do in the context of these changes, that nothing in this act will disturb that solicitor-client privilege and that the privacy of clients is being guaranteed by the society in terms of its procedures.

There is not a lot of understanding, I think, among the general public, and frankly maybe even among some lawyers, about what the role of the law society is and should be. In fact, there has been a good deal of discussion among the profession itself. I know the discussion has raged and there have been requests of the law society to take more of an advocacy role on behalf of lawyers. That discussion has raged on in the society as to whether the law society in its traditional position of being there to protect the public interest is in any way endangered if the law society is also seen as protecting the interests of lawyers.

I think it is important for the public to understand and for all of us to applaud the fact that the law society, in these changes, has clearly come down on the side of being there to further the public interest, to protect the public interest, because that is its prime directive.

I would say, in relation to what my colleague from Welland-Thorold suggested in terms of better public education, that the document provided by the law society entitled *Governing in the Public Interest*, which came out

in December 1997, last December, is probably a wonderful document for helping the public to clearly understand what is embodied in the regulatory changes in this act. It also helps people to understand what the process is and what their role in the process is, and I would suggest to the law society that the wide distribution, the wide availability, of this particular document would be of great benefit to the public in understanding its relationship with lawyers and with the law society itself.

It's very interesting in this document under the second section where the law society reaffirms its mission, a mission to protect the public interest. I'll read the first two paragraphs of it:

"The Law Society Act grants the society the authority to educate, license, supervise and discipline Ontario's lawyers — a responsibility it discharges squarely in the public interest. The society is specifically guided in its commitment to advance the interests of the public by its mission statement, which reads:

"The Law Society of Upper Canada exists to govern the legal profession in the public interest — by ensuring that the people of Ontario are served by lawyers who meet high standards of learning, competence and professional conduct, and by upholding the independence, integrity and honour of the legal profession — for the purpose of advancing the cause of justice and the rule of law."

I think it becomes very evident why you will find all parties agreeing today to this bill going forward, going to committee, going to a process of hearings whereby those who have concerns are able to express them to the members of this Legislature and the members of this Legislature are able to discuss very clearly whether or not amendments are in the best public interest. The law society has assured us that the integrity of the act is such that they do not wish to see amendments brought forward, but part of our process is that we need to do that.

I have only a couple of minutes, because if we intend to bring this to a vote to end second reading tonight, we need to do that before 6 of the clock. I assure you I will do that.

I want to add one other thing. I don't believe many people understand the onerous nature of the work of a benchers of the law society. I brought with me the last bunch of papers from the September 25 meeting. This is actually a small pile compared to many of the meetings, many of the piles of information. Benchers are expected to be familiar with the reports that come from the many committees, are expected to speak to those reports, to accept or change those and to engage in a very rigorous monthly exercise of governing the society. That's just the convocation. In the meantime, there are many committees, and I have been amazed at the efforts and the time benchers spend making sure they are doing their job and they are contributing to ensuring that the profession is governing itself properly.

Part of this act is a change in the way those benchers are going to be elected, to allow for regional representation. This is something that those of us who don't come from Toronto are very anxious to see happen, because we want to be sure that the representation at convocation is

very clearly such that the views of those who are practising law and, of course, the consumers of those services across the province are being honoured.

The act provides for eight lay benchers, an increase. I should tell you that one of the issues when we were the government was that we would have liked to see a higher proportion than that of lay benchers, as we did do with the RHPA, for example, in other professions. However, we understand that the kind of discussion that has gone on has arrived at eight lay benchers as a compromise. One of the reasons we're prepared to go forward with it is that of course we actually have nine lay benchers, because I continue to be a life bencher as a former Attorney General.

I'm going to make a commitment today to the treasurer of the law society, who has urged me on a number of occasions to actually be present at some of the meetings, which of course are always held on a Friday, and Friday is one of the most important days for all of us in this Legislature to do our constituency work. However, I'm going to make a commitment to him today. I think it's very important for me to assume some of my responsibility and I promise him I will make every effort to attend some of the convocation meetings.

This is a very fine action that is being taken today, and I must congratulate the Attorney General for having won the day and managed to get time on the agenda for this act. I know he was being urged to do that before Christmas last year and wasn't able to do it. I'm glad it has come on to the agenda and I trust it will go through the process in a timely fashion so these rules that protect the public get put into place as soon as possible and the law society is able to carry out its mandate with its new rules.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? There being no further debate, are you ready for the question?

Mr Harnick has moved second reading of Bill 53. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? It is carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon Mr Harnick: Mr Speaker, we would like the bill referred to the standing committee on administration of justice.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House agreed? It is agreed.

It being almost 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30.

The House adjourned at 1755.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Wednesday 7 October 1998

Mercredi 7 octobre 1998



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Honourable Chris Stockwell

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L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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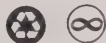
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 7 October 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 7 octobre 1998

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

APPRENTICESHIP AND CERTIFICATION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998

SUR L'APPRENTISSAGE ET LA RECONNAISSANCE PROFESSIONNELLE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 55, An Act to revise the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act / Projet de loi 55, Loi révisant la Loi sur la qualification professionnelle et l'apprentissage des gens de métier.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't think we have a quorum here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Would you please check if we have quorum.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Windsor-Riverside.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): It's good to have had an opportunity to have a break and recharge my batteries so that I could get back here tonight to talk about Bill 55, the bill to completely overhaul the apprenticeship training program that we have in Ontario, a program that, by and large, as we've been hearing from the people who have been contacting us, has been working fairly well for a great number of years. Of course it hasn't been perfect. It's been around for 35 years. It could benefit from a little bit of change, as many things do, but what we're talking about here is a complete overhaul. It's just throwing out the system we have currently to bring in an entirely new scheme of apprenticeship training. I think a big part of the reason for this change coming in is to satisfy the Tory tax scheme to give their rich friends a tax credit and to throw out a lot of protections that apprentices had in the past in the name of red tape.

What this bill is going to do for the first time is require apprentices to pay tuition. We've seen what's happened to students in the last couple of years with respect to increased tuition, the problems they've been having getting student assistance as well, and now apprentices are

going to be faced with the burden of a huge debt load after they're finished their training.

Employers are going to be able to pay lower wages to apprentices as well. I ask anyone out there who's thinking about becoming an apprentice, why would you think about doing that if you are going to be faced with the prospect of having lower wages in the future than apprentices get right now?

The regulated journeyman-to-apprentice ratios are going to be replaced. That's going to be thrown out the window so that on job sites we're going to have less-trained people dealing with apprentices. Health and safety are going to be compromised and the quality of the training is going to be compromised. This is really part of the government's agenda to lower standards, it's part of a race to the bottom, and the reason they're doing it is all to help out their friends in the corporate sector who need a tax break and less regulation. But it's apprentices who are going to have to pay the bill for that. I believe that is unfair and that the majority of people in Ontario think that is unfair as well.

I've been hearing from a number of people who agree with that position. We have a number of them here with us this evening. We have people who represent the Ontario construction industry's labour-management health and safety committee. So this isn't representative of just employees who are saying that what is happening here is going in the wrong direction but also of labour-management committees, committees that are made up of employees and employers.

This is a letter from Dan Lyons, who is the chairperson of the provincial health and safety committee, and Bryon Black, the co-chair of the provincial labour-management health and safety committee, calling on the government to have public hearings. They want to ensure that this bill gets the proper public consultation that it demands.

I've got another letter, from the Ontario Sheet Metal Workers' and Roofers' Conference. This one is addressed to the Minister of Education and Training, Dave Johnson, who I hope has an opportunity to join in the debate this evening. It refers to the comments that were made last night by the member for Simcoe Centre, Joe Tascona.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The members for Nepean and Sault Ste Marie and Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr Lessard: I think it's important that we refresh ourselves about the comments Mr Tascona made. He said: "The bottom line is there was a lot of opportunity. I indicated the number of consultations that were done with a

number of unions. They will have an opportunity if they want to speak on the bill. There will be public hearings and the unions can have their say in the normal process."

Today we expected that the minister was going to make an announcement with respect to public hearings. As yet we haven't had that announcement, but we look forward to it. I'm sure the minister will join us this evening and make the announcement that there will be public hearings, because that is something we're going to be calling for. There needs to be an opportunity for people who are going to be impacted and affected by this legislation to have their say. We've heard from the parliamentary assistant that there have been some consultations, but those consultations, by and large, have been meetings that have been set up for the ministry staff to brief people but not to receive any input from them.

Correspondence, letter after letter, that I've been getting has been very critical of the minister's treatment of those stakeholders who are going to be directly impacted by this. I've got a letter —

Mr Martin: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: My colleague here has a lot of really important things to say about this bill and I don't think there's a quorum in the House.

The Acting Speaker: Would you check if we have quorum, please.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Windsor-Walkerville.

Mr Lessard: It used to be Windsor-Walkerville, Speaker; it's now Windsor-Riverside.

The Acting Speaker: Windsor-Riverside. Sorry about that.

Mr Lessard: I have a letter from James Moffat, who's with us here this evening, and jointly signed with Frank Seip as the co-chairs. That's from the provincial advisory committee for the trade of sheet metal workers. In that letter he is asking that the Ministry of Education and Training have public hearings with respect to this legislation, and I just want to quote from this letter:

"As you are aware, we are a compulsory certified trade and the committee represents thousands of sheet metal employers and workers in the province of Ontario. It is clear to us that Bill 55 will have serious negative consequences for apprenticeship training in this province. The construction industry as a whole has been telling the government that Bill 55 in its present form will weaken the current apprenticeship system.

Mr Martin: Withdraw the bill. Do something. Nobody in the industry wants it.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Lessard: "To ensure our apprentice system remains among the best in North America, public hearings must be held."

That's the very least this government can agree to. We would much rather that they withdrew this bill, that they go back to the drawing board, that they have meaningful

consultations with stakeholders, apprentices and people in the education field and come up with a solution that is really going to encourage young people to engage in a certifiable trade and have the potential to make decent wages at their occupation. That should be the intention of any changes being made to the apprenticeship act. Quite frankly, that's not what we're seeing the direction to be here, and it's unfortunate.

I also have a letter from Dan Schmidt and Paul Grave-line. They're with the provincial advisory committee for the trade of roofers. They are making a similar request that there be public hearings as well. They say: "As concerned industry representatives we plead with you to conduct this consultation process on a province-wide basis. It is essential that the construction industry and other sectors in Ontario can continue to rely on the availability of highly skilled and qualified men and women. Presently we have the most highly skilled construction workforce in North America. The government of Ontario must not do anything to destroy that."

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I can only emphasize that final point, that the province of Ontario shouldn't be doing what it's doing, which is going to result in the destruction of the apprenticeship program and the process that has served this province so well and has provided a skilled and qualified workforce, by and large.

I would like to support the call for public consultation and also the request I made last week, that the regulations that are going to accompany this bill be tabled, because we see that this bill is only a framework, with a lot of the details left to be determined at a later date.

We have Ron Groulx. He's the apprenticeship and training coordinator with the Boilermakers, local 128. He's the employees' representative on the apprenticeship committee. We have Bud Calligan. He's the secretary-treasurer of the carpenters' district council of Ontario, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. We also have Robert Hill, the executive chair of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers on the Construction Council of Ontario, and also James Moffat, the training and trade coordinator with the Ontario Sheet Metal Workers' and Roofers' Conference. I want to welcome them to the Legislature. I see we have Sandra Clifford here from the Ontario Federation of Labour as well.

They're all here because they see that what this government is doing with apprenticeship training is really going in the wrong direction. It's not going too far or too fast; it's going in the wrong direction and it's going to do nothing to improve opportunities for young people to be involved in apprenticeship in Ontario, and is actually going to do much to destroy the process we have had in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Members for Nepean and Sault Ste Marie, order, please.

Mr Lessard: I have another letter. It's from Bob Hill, who's with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and Mike Galley, an employer, Cyril B. Smith

Electric, of the electrical provincial advisory committee. They said to the minister on October 7:

"Dear Mr Johnson:

"We, the undersigned, as authorized representatives of the electrical provincial advisory committee, respectfully request the provincial government to call for public hearings regarding Bill 55 prior to third reading."

It's not just the NDP calling for public hearings on this bill; it is the representatives of thousands and thousands of workers in Ontario and also representatives from employers. They're saying to this minister: "You're going too fast. You're going too far. You're going in the wrong direction. Let's step back. Let's have some meaningful consultation and make sure the changes we bring in are done right." There's a good reason for those changes to be done right, and that is, we want to ensure that not only are young people encouraged to take up apprenticeship training positions — and that encouragement should come by ensuring that they don't have a big debt at the end of it — but at the end, when they do become qualified journeymen, they're able to do their job in a way that is safe, they're not going to be subject to injury or death on the job and the work they do is safe, and we as consumers and the people we represent don't find ourselves exposed to unsafe situations, as they were as a result of work that was done by Bensa Electric.

That's a case I'm sure you're aware of. In February of this year they were fined \$50,000 for a violation of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Fines under that act aren't all that unusual, but I thought it was important to bring to your attention that in this case what happened was that Domenic Pecchia of Toronto was relocating lights and fixtures in the ceiling area of an industrial building in Thornhill. He died as a result of an electrical shock he received while he was on the job. The company pled guilty to assigning electrical installation work to a worker who was not an electrician certified under the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act. He was not an apprentice electrician with equivalent qualification by training or experience.

This was a situation where a company put an unqualified worker on the job and as a result that worker met his death. That is a situation we don't want to see happen in the future. I can see that this legislation, watering down standards, eliminating the ratio of supervision and encouraging employers to actually undertake this sort of action, is going to result in more injury, more death and unsafe conditions for consumers. That's something I don't want to see us as legislators encouraging.

There's another example I'd like to bring to your attention as well. This is from the London Free Press, Saturday, September 26, a very recent example. The headline says, "Londoner Electrocuted at Truck Parts Plant." In that case a London man was electrocuted while doing electrical work at a St Thomas truck parts plant. This was being investigated by the police. It goes on to indicate the type of work he was doing, but I think the final paragraph of the article is important: "Bob McClelland of the Ministry of Labour said the investigation will try to see if Grummett

was properly trained for the work he was doing and if appropriate safety precautions were in place."

That's the sort of thing we need to be looking out for. We need to ensure that workers aren't putting themselves in unsafe positions. We need to ensure that there are more inspectors out there ensuring that workplaces are safe and that there are enough supervisors for persons who are apprentices so they don't expose themselves to unsafe working conditions. The last thing we want to do is encourage employers to try to have work done by people who are uncertified to do the work.

I've got an interesting ad that was in the Expositor last year. It's entitled "Public Safety, Consumer Protection and Environment Under Threat." It says:

"Ontario has one of the best apprenticeship and skills certification programs in the world. Ask yourself, 'Why is this government attempting to destroy it?' Deregulation of the program will kill skilled jobs."

This is from the Ontario Pipe Trades Council, the Mechanical Contractors Association, the Canadian Automatic Sprinkler Association and the Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Contractors Association — once again, representatives of employers in the province. They make the point by saying:

"If you were undergoing surgery, would you like to have an unskilled 'handyman' install the medical gas piping systems?"

"Do you know that your drinking water can be contaminated if systems are improperly installed by unskilled persons?"

"Do you want improper installation by untrained persons of refrigerant systems causing immediate danger to the public and the environment (depletion of the ozone layer)?"

These are the kinds of real concerns that people in the industry have with respect to the reforms that are being brought forward by this government.

We know that part of the reason they're making these changes is as a result of the cuts by the federal government anticipated in 1999 and the fact that there isn't an agreement with the federal government. I thought the minister responsible for intergovernmental affairs made a good point this afternoon when she said that one of the ways we as legislators and others can try to ensure that there is an agreement signed, that the federal government does live up to its obligation to provide funding for apprenticeship and other training through the employment insurance fund, is to write to our Liberal MPs and ask them to ensure that the federal government puts employment insurance funds where they belong: in place to get people who are unemployed through no fault of their own back into the workforce. That includes training programs as well. That's something that we should be encouraging people to do.

This government makes a lot of claims about what is going to be accomplished or achieved as a result of this legislation. They say that deregulation is going to be good, is going to create jobs, but we have to ask ourselves, if there are so many people on waiting lists to become ap-

prentices, so many people on waiting lists down at the hiring hall in the construction trades, where are these opportunities going to be? Where are the training positions for apprentices going to arise?

1850

Sadly, we see, especially in the construction trades — and this is what people are telling me — that there aren't those opportunities opening up now, and they're certainly not going to open up if you lower the wages and increase tuition for people who have to pay for training to become apprentices. That isn't going to encourage anybody to get involved. What this government needs to do is to have a strategy to create jobs. There aren't going to be any people becoming apprentices if they don't think there are going to be any jobs at the end of it.

I remember the Common Sense Revolution talking about some claim that they were going to have 725,000 new jobs by the end of the their mandate, but they have failed miserably when it has come to performance on that. We have to ask ourselves, how is it that these reforms of deskilling, deregulation and increased fees are going to improve that situation?

I have an interesting report. It's from the Business Roundtable, an association of chief executive officers committed to improving public policy. This is an American study that investigates what happened in the south-eastern United States when they decided that they were going to undertake this deregulation of their apprenticeship program. They found that it just didn't work. It didn't have those results that were touted at the beginning. I just want to read one quote from page 6.

It says, "Although apprenticeship training in the union sector is well established and funded through collective bargaining agreements, the number of apprentices now being trained is substantially reduced as the union sector has experienced the effects of decreasing market share."

What they ran into there was that the unionized sector had good training programs, but because the non-union sector was able to bid on many of those jobs, they got all the work. In the non-union sector they didn't have that same encouragement or that same responsibility or that same obligation through collective agreements to put in place good training programs, so guess what? They didn't do it, and it's no surprise. What happens is that instead of being involved in their own apprenticeship training programs, they just raid from other companies and steal their apprentices. That's not going to help with the skilled worker shortage that we are soon to be faced with here in Ontario.

Finally, I want to refer to comments that were made by John Cartwright, the business manager of the construction trades council. He represents 40,000 tradesmen and women in the greater Toronto area. This is somebody who knows of what he speaks. In the title it says, "How to Create a Semi-skilled Workforce." I don't think the government needs any lessons on that; I think they've got the blueprint and that's what they're following. In it he states:

"The Harris Conservatives are about to wipe out the standards for apprenticeship and trades qualifications in

Ontario.... It's all in the name of US-inspired freedom and deregulation."

He says that our employers are full partners in the previous successful experience, and as a result, employers don't support Bill 55 as well. He says they don't support it because, "They have seen what has happened in other jurisdictions where apprenticeship has undermined." He says that as a parent that's not what he wants for his child's future, and that's not the future I want for my son either.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Bill Grimmer (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I'm pleased to make a few comments on the speech from the member for Windsor-Riverside. I noted in his comments several comments about the ozone layer.

He talked at length, reading letters from some of his select friends in the labour movement. Perhaps they're the people who provide him and his party with much of their party funds; I don't know.

He certainly had a lot of negative comments about the bill. I listened closely, and to my knowledge he didn't speak at all about the content of the bill, although his comments on the ozone layer seemed to be quite well informed. There was really no mention of any provisions of the bill itself. We're here to debate Bill 55 and —

Mr Lessard: There's nothing in it. That's why. It's just a skeleton.

Mr Grimmer: The member says there's nothing in Bill 55. I wonder whether he's read it.

There was nothing in his speech about the well-documented shortage of skilled, trained workers in the North American economy and certainly in Ontario. It's well documented that there is a distinct shortage of skilled workers in Ontario. The bill here proposes to double the number of people in apprenticeship programs.

The member was a member of the Bob Rae NDP government, I understand. There was no mention in his speech of what that government did in five years to improve the apprenticeship system in this province to deal with the shortage of skilled workers and to provide more workers for the very unions on whose behalf he purports to speak.

There were no suggestions in his speech for improvement of the bill, but there is a blanket suggestion by the member that we withdraw the bill. I'm very disappointed. The member could have used his time to provide us with some positive suggestions on what else we might do in the bill, if he doesn't support it.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): Looking through this bill, I notice that in subsection 8(3) we have completely forgotten to include the grandfather clause. It says we could have equivalent qualifications. If we are going to go that route, we should specify the grandfather clause because I believe that is what the government wants to refer to.

Also, I'm very surprised that we have not included in this bill that it is a must that everyone who receives certification should have followed the health and safety courses. This is the most important part, especially in the construction industry.

I was just looking this afternoon at the fact that when Quebec residents have worked in Ontario, this government has paid over \$50 million of WCB in the period of three years.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Repeat that. Just repeat that.

Mr Lalonde: Over \$50 million, for accidents, was paid to Quebec resident employees who worked in Ontario. But we completely forgot to put in this bill that it is a must that we have to take a course in health and safety.

Another section that really hit me is subsection 9(3), no renewal: "A letter of permission is not capable of renewal, but the director may issue a new letter of permission." What we are getting at in this point is, who do we know to have them renew this letter? This is definitely not clear. I think the government should go back to the drawing table and revise this section immediately.

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Mr Martin: I want to commend my colleague from Windsor-Riverside for an excellent speech, both last night and this afternoon, pointing out to the government the flaws in this bill and why they should withdraw it — no more talks, no more consultation, no more discussion about this; just withdraw it. Let's get back to developing an industrial strategy for this province, a jobs strategy, that actually puts people to work. We're still suffering in this province with over 15% unemployment among young people.

The only thing that's really sad about the member's speech here last night and today is that the minister who is running this bill through this place doesn't have enough respect for the Legislature to be here to hear what the member has to say. Where is the minister? He wasn't here last night. He's not here today. The member has a lot of important things to say. He's speaking on behalf of industry, on behalf of young people out there and workers across this province. He wants the minister to hear and he's not here.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Long-Term Care, minister responsible for seniors): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member is aware that it is unparliamentary and it is outside of our House rules to refer to the attendance of ministers.

The Acting Speaker: I agree.

Mr Martin: OK, I won't talk about the minister. I had to call a quorum twice tonight to get enough members across the way to keep this place open. You can't even get 16 of you guys in here to listen to the member for Windsor-Riverside as he talks about this diabolical —

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): You only had three members here.

The Acting Speaker: What's happening? Please, we had peace a minute ago. Let's keep it that way.

Mr Martin: What I'm saying is, withdraw the bill. Bring enough members in here to hear us when we say to you, withdraw the bill. It's useless. It's not going to do anything. Bring in an industrial strategy, bring in a real job strategy for this province and then we'll talk.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Peacefully, the member for Northumberland.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): That performance from the member for Sault Ste Marie would have to be at least a 5.8. It was an exceptional performance. Even though he got beat down a couple of times, the performance was exceptional.

I have to agree with the speaker from Windsor-Riverside on one point, and that's about the \$40 million, all the money that was being given by the feds into the apprenticeship program — they're the Liberals, first cousins to the Liberals in the province of Ontario. They're taking that \$40 million right out of the apprenticeship program. They have no interest in apprenticeship programs in Ontario whatsoever. That's terrible. I have to agree with him on that one.

But I disagree with him on the point he made on consultations, that it was only some bureaucrats. I can tell you, the member for Wentworth North, who was parliamentary assistant for education in the winter of 1997, is just a little upset with those comments, because he spent a lot of days out on the road in consultation in connection with this particular bill on apprenticeship programs. He did a great job, and I think it was very unkind of you to make that kind of comment.

I can't help but wonder, when you and the member for Sault Ste Marie were here in government, what you were doing for five years when the apprenticeship act was so outdated; it's now 34 years old; it was passed the last time in 1964. You have so many good ideas, so why wouldn't you have done something? In your last year in government, you only spent five weeks here in the Legislature. You had all kinds of time to have done these very worthwhile things that you were making reference to.

Just winding up, I'd like to remind the member about what the unions had to say about your government: that you were the most anti-labour government in the history of Ontario, that you broke every collective agreement with the public service and you cut their salaries by some 5%.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Windsor-Riverside, two minutes.

Mr Lessard: I want to thank the members for Norfolk, Prescott and Russell, Sault Ste Marie, and Northumberland for their comments. For the member for Norfolk and the other government members, I thought that maybe in their two minutes they would take the opportunity to announce tonight that they were going to have public hearings with respect to Bill 55. That's what people are asking for, some real consultation.

One of the members said, "Why didn't you refer to the details in the bill?" There's a very good reason for that. It's because the bill is only nine pages long. It is a mere skeleton of the changes that this government intends to bring into effect. There's hardly any detail in there. We don't know what they have in mind other than to reduce wages, reduce health and safety standards, increase tuitions for apprentices. All those things, I think we can all agree, are not going to encourage opportunities for young people to undertake apprenticeship.

What this government really needs is a real jobs strategy, something that is going to result in those 725,000 jobs they promised in the Common Sense Revolution. They need some real consultation, not this phony consultation that they had before, where they invited people to meetings, briefed them about what the government was going to do and then went away. People are saying that this is the wrong direction. The government needs to go back to the drawing board, as the member for Prescott and Russell has said.

We need to have the minister listen. The minister should be here listening to what people have to say tonight. I don't know why he's not here. He wasn't here last night. He's probably out putting out fires caused by the closing of schools as a result of Bill 160.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Grimmert: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 55 and to indicate that I'm very happy to see that the government has chosen to revise the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act. This is the first significant rewrite of that legislation since 1964. In fact, Bill 55, also known as the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, is for all intents and purposes a replacement of the old legislation.

My friend from Windsor-Riverside indicates that the bill, in his opinion, is too short. That's the reason he wants it withdrawn. But I would challenge the member to read through the bill and compare it with the present legislation, and then later in my remarks I'd like to take the House through a layperson's understanding of the changes proposed in the bill and how they would affect the average person who is considering going into an apprenticeship program.

Before I do that, I would like to comment briefly, within the context of discussion about the bill, on what our government has been doing in regard to apprenticeship programs for youth in the schools. The Ontario youth apprenticeship program has been around since 1989. It was brought in at that time to allow students who are in high school to commence an apprenticeship program while they complete their high school studies. At that time, the government established enough funding for the program that it has averaged about 1,000 students per year. About two thirds of the district school boards in the province take advantage of that program.

Recently, our government announced that we are investing a further \$1.4 million into the Ontario youth apprenticeship program in an attempt to increase the number of high school students involved in this early experience with apprenticeship program.

That sets the context for this legislation, which is an attempt by our government to address a concern that's out there. I can tell you, it's in my riding. There's a concern throughout the province and really throughout North America that there is a lack of skilled workers to work and for employers to hire in our rapidly expanding, changing economy.

In my own riding, I've had an opportunity to speak to many of the people who are involved in manufacturing especially. For example, there's the Hughes Leitz factory

in Midland, which currently employs around 650 people, maybe more. That is a high-tech operation. They are an internationally recognized manufacturer of high-tech equipment, and they have indicated to me they have a shortage of skilled workers available to them. They have to go far afield to find them. Weber Manufacturing, another manufacturer in Midland, indicated to me that they have to go to Europe to find skilled workers capable of stepping right in and answering the kinds of demands they get in this economy. As many of us are aware, in the economy now, companies have to move quickly to adjust to the demands in the marketplace and to adjust to different economic cycles.

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Another manufacturer in my riding, Algonquin Industries, which has been expanding very rapidly and which supplies parts to a number of the leading manufacturers in the automotive industry, has indicated to me that they have a demand for a certain type of skilled employee, someone who is skilled at using computer technology to design engines for auto parts. This is actually an industry that is rapidly expanding. Ontario is becoming a world leader in the computer design of automotive parts and automobiles. I know there are a number of community colleges in Ontario that are attempting to set up and establish programs so they can train people in this.

We also require that the apprenticeship systems in the province are more closely aligned to needs in industry. One of the things I notice in Bill 55 is that it is geared to involve labour and industry in designing the apprenticeship programs that are available to people who wish to work in those kinds of high-tech jobs that apprenticeship programs are required for.

As I said, I thought I would talk from the perspective of a young person, or maybe a couple of young people who were contemplating perhaps upgrading themselves for a job that required some apprenticeship training. I went through the act and I jotted down a few notes to compare the current legislation with what is proposed in Bill 55. I think it gives you a flavour of the practical impact that this bill would have, particularly for a young person who is thinking of getting into a higher trade.

For example, if a young person was working in a hotel kitchen as an assistant to a baker or a chef and they wanted to become an apprentice pastry chef or cook, here are some of the changes this bill contemplates. I think a key word that you have to keep in mind is "flexibility," because one of the things this bill does is try to provide flexibility not only to potential employees and apprentices but also to employers and trainers.

Currently, people who have a high school education and previous work before they enrolled in an apprenticeship program get no credit for that. Bill 55, the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, is designed to take into account any training that the applicant for apprenticeship has received up until then, either in a practical work location or in some program they were able to involve themselves in. It also takes into account in-school classroom training they might have received. I think that is an

obvious improvement because there is no reason why a person who has had a job skill as an assistant to a baker or a cook shouldn't have that taken into account when their apprenticeship program is designed.

The next point I'd like to make has to do with the flexibility of the training agenda. Currently what happens is that an apprentice enters into a contract of apprenticeship which is signed by the employer and the apprentice and is based on arbitrary time requirements. The Apprenticeship and Certification Act indicates that a training agreement could be developed which is based on industry-approved standards. That would assign clear responsibilities to the sponsor of training and the apprentice and would allow for flexibility in the pace of training. That is a critical issue in this bill that is currently not addressed in existing legislation: the need for flexibility in the pace of training.

It's a different world now. We have people who may want to upgrade their activity, upgrade their ability, their skills, and they may want to keep working at an existing job. They may not have the ability to spend full time at an apprentice position. The act would allow them to have a more flexible work schedule not only for their practical experience in apprenticeship but also for their in-school apprenticeship training.

The issue of quality in terms of the training that's provided is currently not very fully monitored under the existing legislation. There is really no training course for the person who is sponsoring the training under current apprenticeship rules. In the future, if this legislation goes ahead, this act would require that anyone training an apprentice would have to be tested. They would have to undergo periodic review to have their ability as a trainer assessed. I think this is going to lead to improved quality training and provide more assurance to employers that the graduates from these apprenticeship programs are well prepared for the working environment they are moving to.

Another issue that has been raised with regard to the current regime for apprenticeship is that the classroom training is too rigid, that it's scheduled by the government and it's based on group purchases of classroom seats from the trainer. That's really the only option available if you want to go into apprenticeship. Under the proposed act, Bill 55, the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, the apprentice would decide when to take classroom training according to the workplace needs. So there would be flexibility again and they could work out with their employer what would be an appropriate time to do the in-school portion of the apprenticeship program. There would be no disruption of work patterns, of productivity or of the workplace-based training that the employer or the sponsor would provide.

As a second aspect of that schooling, currently there are only a limited number of sites where the in-school part of the apprenticeship program is offered, at sites that are approved by the government. This legislation, Bill 55, An Act to revise the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act, allows that the trainer who has signed up to provide the apprenticeship training has to meet the criteria en-

dorsed by the industry as far as the location where the learning would take place.

This would allow for distance education. Anyone who is familiar with distance education knows that it is the use of technology especially to train people who are in remote locations. They don't all have to come to Toronto; they don't all have to go to a central urban location. This is certainly something that I'm sure industry would find very interesting and very easy to support. The trainer would be able to provide distance education and computer-assisted learning rather than have all of the classes taking place in a traditional classroom somewhere in Toronto or London or some large urban centre.

I think the obvious benefit of that provision in the bill is that the apprentice would be better able to attend classroom training without any financial or personal hardship or disruption of their lives or work, especially if they took advantage of the distance training and were able to receive it in some remote locations in northern Ontario or other parts of the province. They would have more training formats that would be available to meet their diverse needs as learners. I think that's something we all recognize has already been brought into the education system at other levels, and there's no reason why it can't be brought into the apprenticeship system.

The issue of how the school is paid for — and here I hearken back to the comments made by the member for Windsor-Riverside, who made the very good point that the federal government has indicated to the province of Ontario that it will be withdrawing its funds from the apprenticeship training program. The estimate is \$30 million, and it could be as high as \$40 million, that will be taken out of the apprenticeship program. Here we are in the midst of trying to design an apprenticeship program that will satisfy the needs of industry in Ontario and we're hit with this sudden loss of financial support from the federal government. So we've had to design the program accordingly.

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Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Is that the Liberal government?

Mr Grimmett: The federal Liberal government has withdrawn the funds, and they have indicated that in the next fiscal year we'll have \$30 million less, minimum.

Mr Guzzo: The same amount they gave Castro.

Mr Grimmett: The program is being designed despite that loss of revenue.

Under this program, rather than having the employer or the taxpayer pay the entire amount, the apprentices would also contribute their fair share to the cost of training, and they would be helped by financial assistance from the government, which is currently not available under the regime. The training would be more client-focused and the client would pay, and I can tell you that if they are going into the kinds of jobs that I mentioned in my riding that are provided in these industries that are looking for highly skilled employees, it would be a good investment on the part of the trainee to enrol in these programs.

Another area that's been an issue under the current legislation is that an apprentice has to obtain tools for their trade, and up to now they have had to pay for it entirely on their own without assistance from any other source. The legislation indicates that there would be loan assistance available from the provincial government to buy tools that are essential for training.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): A loan? Why don't you just get rid of the tuition and then they could afford to buy their tools?

Mr Grimmett: The NDP has a way to do this, but they had five years to do that and they did nothing.

Mr Wildman: We didn't impose tuition. You are imposing tuition on these people.

The Acting Speaker: Order, member for Algoma.

Mr Grimmett: As I've indicated, there are numerous practical examples of how this legislation addresses real problems that exist with the current apprenticeship regime in Ontario. Present with us this evening in the gallery is Cosmo Mannella, who is the director of the Labourers' International Union of North America. He has indicated his support for the legislation, and I'll quote him: "The main feature of this legislation is that it puts apprenticeship training back into the hands of industry partners, employers and employee representatives. Industry is best suited to drive the training response to the human resource development needs of the workplace." That is a comment from Cosmo Mannella, who is the director of the Labourers' International Union of North America.

We've also had comments from industry people about the legislation. I'd like to quote the president of the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association, Gerald Fedchun, who said, "We have a tremendous shortage of skilled trades in the parts industry." That is something that I indicated at the beginning of my speech. In my riding it's an acute problem. I'm sure it's even more significant in some parts of Ontario that are even more reliant on high-tech industry. All of them, I think, have experienced a shortage of skilled workers in the last decade or so. He goes on to say: "One third of our skilled workers will be retiring in the next 10 years, and this legislation will help us." That is an endorsement from industry.

I'd like to conclude my remarks by saying that I think I've provided some good practical indications tonight why this legislation will address some of the needs that are out there not only in industry but also in terms of the labour market. They need to acquire the skills to get into these kinds of jobs. Industry needs a better apprenticeship program in Ontario, and I believe Bill 55 goes a long way to addressing those concerns.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I listened to the government side, and the government has I think correctly identified that there is a problem here, there is a skills shortage, and there needs to be an effort to deal with it.

The problem with the legislation being produced here by the government is that it contains in reality some barriers, some real hindrances to achieving this goal. How can the government on the one hand start talking about

trying to improve access to apprenticeships, trying to expand the program, and on the other hand impose new tuition barriers for people to engage in this program, to participate in this program, because they are now going to have to pay tuition?

Anyone who understands the economics of this knows that as soon as you put a price on something, you create a barrier. People will have to fork the money out, find it from savings, borrow, what have you, and some people who ought to be participating in this program will have to make other decisions because they can't afford to do it. I think this is wrong.

As well, we have the removal of the minimum education standards. That's not going to relate to the access of people into the program, but it certainly will deal with the quality of the product coming out of the program. There's no point in us participating in a program where there are no minimum standards, because in the end we may find ourselves with inferior products that will hurt the Ontario economy, hurt the Ontario workforce, and certainly hurt the public interest as a result.

The other item deals with the deregulation of mandated wages for apprentices. This is obviously a gift towards industry because it means they can put down the wages for the people who are participating in this program. We want to have a fair program here. People should be justly rewarded for the amount of time and effort they put into learning these skills and also providing the work for industry.

So this legislation requires improvement.

Mr Martin: I want to say that the member for Ottawa West is absolutely right and that the member across the way, no matter how reasonably he presents himself or sounds here, he's wrong.

Mr Wettlaufer: Tony, you came back. How nice. I'm glad you came back.

Mr Martin: He's wrong. In fact, what this bill is about — and I hope that some of the members, including Mr Wettlaufer, are sincerely interested in hearing what's wrong with this bill. I would hope you would talk to your caucus and your government and tell them to withdraw this bill, because it's not in the best interests of our economic future, the future of young people and the future of work in this province, and I'll tell you why.

In summary, for the first time in the history of Ontario, apprentices will be forced to pay tuition. Employers will be able to pay lower wages to apprentices. The regulated journey person-to-apprentice ratio will be replaced with guidelines for employers. Guidelines. Compute that to mean more and more apprentices to journeypersons in the workplace. The two-year minimum for contracts is going to be dropped. The current system of compulsory certification for the trades will be undetermined.

Put that together with a move last spring by this government to introduce new fees and increase other fees already paid by apprentices. We hear the member across the way talk about the paltry sum that they may put out to pay for the tools of apprentices if they ever get into apprenticeships in the first place when they look at the

wall that's being built against them, when you consider the tuitions and you consider the debt they will have at the end of the day. They may pay for a few of their tools. When you stack that up against the tuition fees and against the new fees that were introduced last spring and the other fees already paid by apprentices, it pales in comparison.

The only right thing to do in front of this legislation, Mr Wettlaufer, if you'd only talk to your government members, is to withdraw the bill.

Mr Baird: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to my colleague the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay. The member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay always does his homework and has researched these issues considerably, and he's actually read the bill, so he's very well aware.

Two things that I know are important to constituents in the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay's riding and mine are the youth apprenticeships for secondary school students — I noticed he made some reference to that, and that's something that is indeed important for young people in my constituency — and distance education. A lot of the technology that's used in distance education was actually researched and developed right in my constituency of Nepean and indeed in our region of Ottawa-Carleton. So I know he thinks that's important.

I was, however, particularly struck at the member opposite reporting to the House the federal Liberal cut of \$30 million to apprenticeship reform. The federal Liberals keep cutting programs for the unemployed. That's all they keep doing. The member for Ottawa-Rideau was pointing out that that's the exact same amount of money that they are giving in foreign aid to Castro this year. So they have more money for Communist dictators than they do for apprenticeship students in Ontario. That's something we've come to expect from the federal Liberal government in Ottawa, because they seem to have more money for pepper spray than they do for apprenticeships, not just for Castro but to help our friend Suharto out.

I, like the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay, am concerned about the raid on EI funds paid for by hard-working Ontario workers and small business people. We want them to have that money back. Yesterday we had a rare moment in this country: We had all four political opposition leaders at the federal level come together to fight. We thought, "If they can do that in the House of Commons, we can do that here." So we said, "Let's get all three parties together to tell the federal government not to raid the EI fund, to help Ontario workers, to help Ontario's small businesses." But they didn't. The Liberals wouldn't even get up and speak to it. Dalton McGuinty wouldn't even stand up. To give the NDP and Howard Hampton some credit, at least they are prepared to join Mike Harris in fighting this fight.

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Mr Martin: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the spirit of the member opposite, I would like to move a motion for unanimous consent to withdraw this bill right here, right now, tonight. How's that? Can we do that?

The Acting Speaker: This is not a point of order. Take your seat.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I would have been prepared to give that unanimous consent. I think the member is calling the bluff of the YPC from Nepean who used to protest at Queen's University at one time. The Fraser Institute sends these people out and they send the message forward.

I was wondering why the member didn't mention tuition during his speech, because that is what is happening. These people are now applying tuition to this. I should tell you that what they are doing with tuition right across this province is something to behold. They are allowing tuition to go sky-high, so that the YPCs, those who are rich, those who are powerful, will have the opportunity to acquire a post-secondary education, but the person of modest means will not be able to do so. That is the Reform-a-Tory way. That is the way of the Harris government, not the way of the Davis government.

The Davis government had to ensure that we had the Ontario student assistance program, OSAP, and they were generous in that. They recognized that to be mainstream in this province you have to help the people who are at the lowest end financially. They recognized that a publicly funded education system is there to provide equality of opportunity. Not equality of outcome — we can't make sure of that — but equality of opportunity.

Now only will the very rich be able to have the best graduate programs in university, only the very rich will be able to afford to have community college and university education in this province, unless of course they are brilliant students and are able to get scholarships. That's what the Conservatives are all about.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay, you have two minutes.

Mr Grimmatt: I want to thank the members from Ottawa West, Sault Ste Marie, Nepean and St Catharines for their insightful comments on my remarks earlier.

I did want to address the points raised by the member for St Catharines because today we had the opportunity to meet with representatives from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. They provided us with some very intriguing and surprising information that resulted from a survey they commissioned from an independent polling firm. Environics did some polling for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. What they were looking at was youth unemployment and the views of youth on the employment situation in Canada.

It's very insightful and for most of us at the meeting it was very surprising. In fact, when the general populace is surveyed on youth employment there is a feeling that youth employment is a problem and the prospects for youth getting employment are not very good. But when youth in Canada are themselves surveyed on this issue, they actually have a very positive outlook on their opportunities for getting employment in the future. This is by an independent pollster. My understanding is that Environics does a lot of polling for the NDP as well.

The polling also indicated that when youth were asked where the main responsibility was for finding employment and generating opportunities for employment, it showed that youth thought that the main responsibility was their own. The lowest of all the categories that they were asked about, as far as who had responsibility for finding them employment was concerned, fell on government itself. They see their own responsibility and that's why we have come up with an apprenticeship program where the apprentice has to take some responsibility.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I want to say what a privilege it is for me to speak on Bill 55, the Apprenticeship and Certification Act.

Maybe it's important to put certain things in perspective because of some of the comments. We want them to be quite relevant and focused.

As you know, apprenticeship is a training program that really combines workplace experience and some academic institutions. We have about 48,000 apprentices working for more than 26,000 employers in Ontario. Approximately 11,000 new apprentices come into the system each year. They may enter through contracts with employers that outline some of the commitments, both of the apprentice and the employer, terms of the apprenticeship that will provide more or less a basic accountability.

Between 75% and 90% of apprenticeship training takes place on the job, with apprentices working under the direction of a skilled journeyman. The reason I mention that is because this government is going to tamper with part of that structure, which is working well. The other 10% to 25% of the training takes place in the classroom, in the community colleges or other classroom environments. The community colleges deliver about 95% of that training. Therefore, most of that money that goes to institutional training goes towards community colleges, more or less to in-school instruction. I'm quite familiar with that. In my background as an administrator in a community college, I've seen that and seen how it works effectively. Of course, it could be improved more as we go along.

All this training is based on provincial standards and it's important that we have provincial standards. Furthermore, I have some concern that some of those standards should be more national. I'll get to that later on, how important it was when the federal government was a part of this, because it was able to institute and maintain some national standards.

There are currently about half a million certified skilled workers in Ontario sharing about 67 trades that are designated as regulated. When you think about apprenticeship, they would like you to believe that apprentices are individuals who are young people. The average age of an apprentice now is about 26. Therefore, it will be long after they finish their formal education, in some respects, that some people enter into apprenticeship. I want to come to that later on. This government is bragging about the great change to this apprenticeship act, how it is going to

improve it. I'll show you it will not improve it, how they're tampering with it.

As you know and as many people have commented here, the federal government has indicated that it was not going to advance the funding for apprenticeship. This government took the opportunity to tamper with it further. I, for one, am not quite happy that the federal government is not playing a very strong role in apprenticeship, because national standards are extremely important. We are in the country of Canada and it's good to know that skilled workers can move around to any part of Canada and not be restricted to one specific province. Therefore, my sentiment about national involvement or federal involvement is that it's important. I'm disappointed that this is not so. The federal government is offering loans and grants to help in some of the training.

One of the concerns I have, which is a consistent concern of many of the members of the opposition when it comes to discussing legislation or having it available for consultation, is the limited way in which this government operates. First, they will hint about what they want to do, leak what they want to do, and then when it does come out and it comes as any sort of a bill in the House, they restrict it in many ways and put closure on it.

Here we are, struggling around trying to get consultation, because this bill needs extensive consultation. As I mentioned before, there are 67 different trades involved in this. Therefore, a thorough consultation must take place to see that we cover all the trades and that they have their input. The tradesmen and the professionals out there know what a trade is all about and we need to hear from them. But this government doesn't do that. They will leak it and then ram it through the House, force it and put closure on it. That's typical of their way: no consultation whatsoever, or minimum consultation. I have great concerns about that.

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Because of the short time I have, let me just mention some of the things that would adversely affect this apprenticeship program. As I said earlier on, the government intends to eliminate the journeyman within the system who would more or less monitor the new apprentices coming in, replacing the regulated ratio with voluntary guidelines for employers. In other words, they want the employer to monitor this.

Working along with an expert — not with a company, which somehow would not be paying full attention — it will be about what the employer wants. So it will be employer-driven; not really what the economy or what the workplace wants, but how that specific employer will drive the direction of the learning process.

One of the concerns I had when I was in the college system was that sometimes when we had business influencing the worker, they would decide that some things were unnecessary — maybe English was not necessary — and they would take off what they call the liberal studies aspect of it and focus basically on hands-on kind of stuff without having a whole educational process. It's important. What happens most of the time is that when that apprentice gets out in the workplace, sometimes they can't

even read a blueprint well, or what have you. Therefore, it is important that the national government plays a very important role, with national rules and regulations, and not the workers themselves.

The journey person is a hands-on individual who can give a lot of guidance. I think we could have less supervision and therefore inferior training.

They want deregulation of the mandated wages for apprentices. Here is the catch now. These workers' employers are going to reduce that to a point where maybe it is below minimum wages I'm sure. Many of the folks, the people who get into this apprenticeship are, on average, 26. Many of them have formal education and they will be exploited because they want to get into a trade and the employers are going to regulate it from the point of view that the wages are far less. That itself bothers me enormously.

The part that grabs me more so than anything else is the removal of the minimum education standards. Right now the minimum standard to enter into apprenticeship is grade 10. While the fact is that most professions one goes into require more formal education, now we're going to drop it to less. Health and safety: This is not a good way to go. The technology of today is so advanced and so quick-changing that we need people who are educated. Many students may be jumping out of classes before grade 10 hoping to go there with far less formal education. I can't understand. No wonder the consistency of this Minister of Education, who somehow doesn't seem to want to build a better education system. He is diluting the process right here and diluting to where health and safety will be jeopardized. As a matter of fact, I would think that formal training, formal education, assists in more efficient training.

Tuition for training: Let me go to another point. Tuition fees are one of the sort of write-offs for this government. Since it has been in power it has increased tuition fees to over 60%. **Access to training:** For those who haven't got the funds, what's going to happen is that they will decide or realize they cannot enter the field.

OSAP: They said they were going to give a contribution in regard to OSAP. They haven't even worked that out yet. They're waiting to see what the feds will do before they do something and then they will come here bashing the feds. In the meantime, the student or the apprentice will be sitting there waiting for these two governments to work out their issues.

Tuition fee increases do not work to help and assist access to training. That increase impedes. It's time this government understood that. As a matter of fact, tuition fees today — my kids have a greater debt on their heads, an OSAP loan, more than the mortgage when I owned my first house. That's only for tuition fees. Can you imagine a 22-year-old coming out of university owing maybe \$25,000 to \$30,000? My other daughter, who has her master's, is worried mad now about how she is going to pay for that. She's in debt right up there.

The fact is that this government, which says, "We cannot put debt on the back of our children," is deliberately

doing that. I don't know if you knew this: There's a change in OSAP that states very precisely that if a student wants to declare bankruptcy, they cannot include their OSAP loan in that. The fact is that they will be burdened for life, even though they can't pay. The government has cut a deal with —

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): Aren't you paying for your kids to go to university? Shame.

The Acting Speaker: You're not in your chair.

Mr Curling: The government has cut a deal with the banks because they're going to guarantee that. The member over there asked, am I not paying for my children's education?

Mrs Johns: You should be. That's a disgrace.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Huron.

Mrs Johns: Sorry.

The Acting Speaker: Remain quiet in your chair.

Mrs Johns: No.

Mr Curling: You see, these Tories, who have their pockets financed by many corporations in many ways, feel that everyone in politics is supposed to be as rich as they are. I'll tell you, we are working-class people too. We are working-class people who represent our people here. As to whether I pay for the education of my children, I do contribute to the education of my children. So you could get off that one.

Mrs Johns: — take away our pension, you'd be a wealthy man.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Huron, I don't need to tell you all the time. Don't challenge the Chair, please.

Mr Curling: I think a lot of the Conservatives feel they are the Titanic and they can't sink, and they will challenge any authority, even you, Mr Speaker, for whom I have tremendous respect, especially the position you hold.

Who supports this thing? Let me read a letter from Interior Systems Contractors Association of Ontario. They wrote to me and they sent their document, "Research Brief Tuition For Life."

"I believe that the government-contemplated tuition for apprentices would do irreparable harm not only to my training centre but to all apprenticeable trades in this province.

"The Interior Finishing Systems Training Centre is a jointly funded centre by the International Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America and the International Brotherhood of Painters and Allied Trades, Acoustical Association Ontario and Interior Systems Contractors Association of Ontario.

"I would greatly appreciate some time from your busy schedule" — of course I will meet — "so that I may answer any questions that may arise from the reading of this document."

They are extremely concerned. But as I said, while this government is hurrying it through, they would like to speak to you in consultation and they would like to make sure that the harmful, dangerous direction in which you're going in apprenticeship is not the way in which to go.

In summary, I would say that all of this that you're doing is not healthy. You talk about creating jobs. It's not a way of creating jobs. Let me tell you too that access to many of these trades is being impeded by the way things are done.

There was a wonderful study that was done about access to trades and professions. Many people have found barriers getting into these trades. I had hoped that when they were addressing the apprenticeship program they would look at the access, but what they have done is built more barriers — not providing access but building more barriers to apprenticeship.

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It's important. We know where the economy is going. We see the boom and some people want to plug into the system, but oh, no, they can't. Our diversity, our multicultural province, if you want to call it that, asked us to be much more sensitive in how we utilize many of those people who have come to Canada as their new home and have skills and want to be accepted. This government should start looking at removing those barriers, making sure we can utilize many of those people — not like the Minister of Community and Social Services, who comes in here bragging and talking about how many people are off welfare.

Many of these people who are off welfare, she said, have jobs. She may feel that they're walking around with jobs and briefcases. Do you know what their briefcase is? Their briefcase is this. Many people out of jobs are going to the food banks. They're going there looking for food.

While this minister comes in and talks about people on welfare, that with the reduction it's the lowest since 1991 — they don't know where they are. I invite many of those members to get out of their Tory Bastille to look at the grilles and the vents outside, where people are lying who are disillusioned or discouraged or have been bullied by our government, which doesn't look after the most vulnerable in our society.

That's where government is more sensitive. You'll be judged by how you treat people. Access into jobs for those who — we're not very concerned about the rich, who can easily pay tuition and go somewhere else and get great training and all that. Those individuals who need access to training, who need access to apprenticeship, don't need an increase in fees and don't need for it to be handed over to the employer to say, "You handle that." They need a government that is sensitive and understanding of the diversity of our province, to find out how best we can utilize that.

Mrs Johns: Aren't you paying for your kids to go to university?

Mr Curling: One asks, "How can you pay for that?" Let me tell you who can pay for that.

Mrs Johns: You should be paying. That's a disgrace.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Member for Huron, come to order.

Mr Curling: When you take the tax cut and give it to the rich — if you had taken the tax cut from the rich and turned it back to them, maybe we would be better off

today. The member who yells over there has no idea at all, doesn't even know that those individuals out there on the streets with their briefcases are looking, as I said, for food banks and feeling, "Our situation is much lower today." It's because you, the Harris Conservative government, have turned to the most vulnerable in our society and cut 22% off their subsidy.

Mrs Johns: Oh, talk about a vulnerable society. That is why —

Mr Curling: As the member for Huron yells over there, I would ask her to contribute 22% of her salary back, just like your minister cut the most vulnerable in our society, and then we will tell you how it feels. These are people who cannot even afford affordable housing. If you want people to have access to training, get to the Minister of Housing, who has demolished all affordable housing and has these people on the grilles outside. If you want people to have access, get to the people who are really sick and maybe someday can't afford medicare. They can't get the service, so the poor will be suffering. If you want access to training, make sure that the vulnerable in our society get justice, that when they go to court it's not dragged out for a long time, or lawyers, through their fees.

That's how we measure a government: who looks after the most vulnerable, not those who go about giving tax breaks to the rich and then say, "How wonderful we are."

I want to say that this legislation they're bringing forward has done nothing for those people who need it most.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I agree with our Liberal friend here that Bill 55 does nothing for the apprenticeship program. The provincial and federal governments are cutting back on apprenticeship funding, and now they're going to bring in user fees and tuition fees.

In my other life, I went through an apprenticeship program in the millwright trade at Spruce Falls Power and Paper Co and became a millwright, working on the paper machines and repairing elevators. I know what the program is all about and how it should be expanded instead of cut back, as we have now.

There should be a regulation or a law saying that all garages should have a certain number of apprentices in their workplace so they can train on the job and make sure they have mechanics there when needed, rather than cutting back on the programs and then when the need arises, when there's a boom in the economy, having to go outside the province or outside Canada to find skilled tradesmen, when it could be done right within Ontario. Ontario is the engine of the economy in Canada and we should be expanding it.

We know that youth unemployment is well over 15%. It's probably 20% or 25% in northern Ontario, but it's well over 15% on average. This government is doing nothing to create employment for them. As a matter of fact they're not going to be anywhere near the 725,000 jobs they said they were going to create during their first term. Since August, Ontario has lost over 22,000 jobs. Now Bill 55 is going to make it even worse in terms of losing jobs in Ontario. It's a sad situation.

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): The member touched on a number of issues. The one that comes to mind immediately is his reference to the removal of standards. I want to draw the member's attention to subsection 5(2) of the bill, particularly where he made reference that we're affecting the minimum age requirement. I'm going to read to the member what subsection 5(2) says. It says, "An agreement shall not be registered unless the individual who is to receive the training is at least 16 years of age." The whole issue of a minimum age requirement is captured in this bill. I want to draw that to the member's attention because I'm sure, upon reflection, he will give consideration to that issue.

Second, it's not about bashing the feds. My colleagues in the NDP, and myself last night, simply are raising a reality here. We're clearly seeing from the federal government a reduction of some \$30 million in funding to the province with respect to training. Very clearly the evidence is there: They're withdrawing their services as applied to training in this province. Given the contribution we make in terms of EI benefits to the federal government, we want a fair-share agreement for this province, given the percentage of the labour force we have here. That's one issue that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs said today in question period we're anxious to negotiate — albeit we're the last province to have a training agreement in this country, coincidentally — one we're anxious to negotiate on behalf of workers in this province.

Lastly, he made some very specific references about OSAP, much to the concern of my colleague from Huron. I want to remind the member that OSAP funding in this province is up some 33%. Access to funding, from 1995 to 1999, increased by some \$364 million. We are providing an additional \$87 million in student aid through the colleges and universities, and we've provided new scholarship opportunities and permanent trust funds in the amount of \$600 million.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I want to respond to my colleague's comments today about this important piece of legislation. I want to begin by saying that regardless of partisan stripe, this colleague of mine has done more than any other person in this House, I would suggest, to remove barriers, to work with communities. He has done as much as anybody in this House has.

Oftentimes when you hear the kind of despicable comments from government members about ability to pay — because that's what it's all about for the member for Huron. It's about ability to pay. If you can afford the tuition, you'll get to university. If you can afford the health care, in the member for Huron's lexicon, you'll get the health care. If you can't afford it, you're a big joke and you're a big laugh. Well, the big joke and the big laugh is an elected member of this House who would look down her nose at people like that, who would say: "If you cannot afford tuition, ha, ha, ha, too bad for you. You've got to have the debt. If you can't afford the debt, you can't get an education." That tells more about the member for Huron and what that government is about than any piece of legislation and any statement and any numbers ever

said. That member says: "If you can afford it, if you can afford designer clothes, if you can afford the best of everything, you can afford university tuition, and if you can't afford it, too bad. If you can't afford health care, too bad." We've got it: I've got it, the member for Huron, we can access it. Too bad for the rest of you.

Students, your debt load has doubled, your tuition has doubled under this government, almost as much as it went up under the NDP, almost as much. So let's talk about it. This government's about people who can afford it, and you don't care about people you can't. You should be ashamed of your comments. You're disgusting.

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Mrs Johns: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think that I was very badly misquoted there. What I was saying was that anyone in this House who makes the dollars that we make should be paying for —

The Deputy Speaker: Order. That may be a point, but it's not a point of order. And I would like to remind the member for Windsor-Walkerville that we do not make comments to other members that are unparliamentary.

I recognize the member for Cochrane South.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I listened with great intent to the comments from the member for Scarborough North as he spoke on this particular bill. It is awful hard to take the Liberal Party when it comes to a number of issues in this Legislature, but on this one they've got no credibility. Their federal cousins, the Jean Chrétien Liberals in Ottawa, are the people causing this problem in the first place. The Tories are just as bad, but the Jean Chrétien Liberals are the government that is cutting the funding going to community colleges in this province and to the apprenticeship training program, which in the end is hurting the apprentices of this province.

It doesn't stop there. The Liberal Party of Canada, in power under Jean Chrétien, are the ones who have made the reforms to the EI program. Do you remember unemployment insurance? I see apprentices in this room. I went through an apprenticeship program. When I did, we used to get paid the full eight weeks as we went through our apprenticeship training and community college for basic, intermediate and advanced. The Jean Chrétien Liberals have taken away the two weeks at the beginning of the program and say that it has to count as your waiting period. So you've lost two weeks right off the top; you're only paid for six.

Then I hear the member for Windsor-Walkerville, or whatever Windsor riding he comes from, talk about how the member for Scarborough North has done more for equity in this Legislature than any other member. The member for Scarborough North voted against employment equity, the very bill that would have given people access to the workplace across this province. The member for Scarborough North voted against it.

"Oh, I care," says the member for Scarborough North, "about all those people who got a 28% decrease on their welfare payments and their FBA payments by the province of Ontario." What did they call their promise in the last election? Mandatory work opportunity. A bunch of pho-

nies: Liberals standing up trying to convince people that they care about them, but in the end, they're nothing but a bunch of Tories, the same as Jean Chrétien.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Scarborough North, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr Curling: How happy I am to respond to many of the members. I just want to correct the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay. I didn't say "minimum age"; I said "minimum wage." The fact is that I was talking about minimum wage instead.

I want to thank my colleague from Windsor-Walkerville for his excellent presentation.

Let me address my good friend from Cochrane South a little. It was not my party that shattered the collective bargaining agreement, actually attacked labour, so they had to bow their heads in here in shame.

Let me tell you now about access. We talk about access to trades, access to opportunities, employment equity. That is the party that built walls around employment equity. That is the one that cut the deal with the unions about seniority rights, that nobody may be promoted unless they're senior. That is not employment equity. That is the kind of employment equity you're trying to tell us we must support? We support access and employment equity that is fair to all people regardless of unionization, regardless of individuals. We want fairness and access for all.

That's the kind of government that the people threw out, because they could see the kinds of things they were doing. They weren't real. They fought so much for labour but then went back and really attacked the labour movement and took away the bible itself, the collective bargaining agreement.

Let me tell you, the apprenticeship program you are setting up will not be effective. It builds walls and it will not give access to those who need it more. The government in here must make sure that people have access to opportunities.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: In the 20 minutes I have, I want to start by saying that the Liberals have been anything but consistent when it comes to employment equity. They voted against it when we introduced it as government, and then they voted against the government when they repealed employment equity. If anybody can figure out if there's any consistency in that — I don't know.

I'll say another thing. Vis-à-vis the social contract, far better a Rae day than what the Mike Harris government has done to the workers of this province.

Now on to the bill. The Tories are bringing forward a bill that they say is necessary to give the employers of this province the competitive advantage and the competitive edge they need to be able to create opportunities for employment for young workers in Ontario. If you listen to this speech long enough, you almost start to think, "Maybe Mike Harris has got something here." You listen to it and you really think, "My Lord, maybe Mike Harris has got something here." The spin is so good, the spin is so fantastic. It sounds like, "You know, if the government passes this bill, there will be all kinds of jobs created and ap-

prentices across this province would prosper and they would do so well and the employers would be great."

But my Lord, when you look at the details of this bill, you find out it's quite the opposite of what the Conservatives are trying to put forward in the arguments of the debate. Let's look at some of the details of what this government is trying to do.

I'm fortunate. I'm one of the few people in Ontario who has gone through an apprenticeship training program. I joined Pamour Mines in 1980 or 1979 and went through an electrical apprenticeship training program through what was then Pamour Mines, now called Royal Oak Mines in Timmins. I was fortunate enough to go through apprenticeship training that said five years of experience on the job supervised by tradespeople who are qualified, and then strengthened by experience that I would get from the community college system — eight weeks at basic, eight weeks at intermediate, eight weeks at advanced and another eight weeks on top of that for your electronics endorsement — to be able to write my exam as an electrician.

At no time during that former apprenticeship training system that the Tories are trying to say is no good was my life put in danger because I didn't know what I was doing or was the employer's equipment put in danger because maybe I wouldn't have known? That's because the system is set up in a way that it is an apprenticeship system in reality, that when the apprentice works on a piece of equipment, he or she is supervised by a qualified tradesperson. That qualified tradesperson passes on the skills set that the new apprentice needs; they learn how to use the tools, learn how to use the equipment, learn how to fix whatever it might be, electrical, mechanical or whatever apprenticeship training you're going through. All of that's strengthened by a strong community college program that gives us apprentices an opportunity to learn the technical skills we need to know to do our jobs well.

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What does that mean for me as an apprentice? It means that (a) I become qualified, and (b) I can do my job safely. What a wonderful idea, saving money from workers' compensation premiums and, more important, possibly saving lives or injury on the job.

What does it mean to the employer? It means the employer ends up with qualified people who can do the job. What's wrong with that? Employers are investing millions and billions of dollars in equipment in the mining industry, forestry, pulp and paper, automotive, the trades, and the list goes on. What you've got is qualified people to work on that equipment, to first of all install it in the construction trade and then to make sure that once the papers are signed and we give the plant over to the operator, the stuff works and there are some qualified people to be able to maintain it to make sure the stuff works right. What's wrong with that? It's called good business; it's called safety; it's called a bit of common sense.

But this government says, "No. We're going to do away with this system that we have in Ontario," that is, quite frankly, one of the best apprenticeship training pro-

grams in the world. It's not perfect. There are things that I would like to see if we were really talking about strengthening apprenticeship training, that I would like to bring in a bill. Part of that was started under our government with the OTAB program and others. But this government says: "No. We're going to talk the line about making a better system," but really, when you look at what they're doing and the meat of it through the bill, we find out the government is doing exactly the opposite.

Let me give you a couple of examples of what they are doing. The first thing that these guys — and I say "these guys" because this government is made up of nothing but a bunch of old, grey-haired guys, by and large — are saying is, "We are going to make ourselves a system where we're going to allow cross-trading in regulation and in legislation in the industry of Ontario."

I've got to tell you, as a journeyman electrician and also as a citizen, cross-trading sounds like great talk when it comes to industry and it sounds like great talk when it comes to people who don't understand what this is all about. It actually sounds as if it might be something good: You can go and get all kinds of training and you're going to be so smart. You know what it means? It means you're going to end up with people in industry who have a little bit of training in a whole bunch of different things but in the end are not specialized to work in any particular trade. I'm proud to say I'm an electrician. It took me five years of apprenticeship training and schooling to be able to get that trade. I renew that licence because it's something I'm proud of.

But this government says: "We're not going to value the training; we're not going to value the trades of mechanics and machinists and millwrights and all of the other trades that are included. No. We're going to allow for cross-trading. We're going to allow for multi-tasking, multi-trading," whatever it happens to be called in industry.

Interjection: "Deskilling."

Mr Bisson: Deskilling is the long and the short of the story.

But what that means in practical content is this. You have an industry. I come from Timmins. By and large it's mining, pulp and paper, the sawmills, and a waferboard plant. What you're going to end up with — it's already started in industry, because the industry has been pushing to a certain extent to cross-skill in this province — are situations where you're going to call in a mechanic who has maybe two weeks or three weeks of training to go in and pull the disconnects on a 4160 motor. You say: "What's hard in that? It's just pulling three fuses." My friends, I've got a good buddy of mine who was a mechanic who got cross-skilled who is now dead because of that.

I'm taking this seriously because I remember Rudy Konegan quite well from Wawa. Rudy was a fellow I had met through the BEST program when I was an instructor with the BEST program, or a coordinator. Rudy at the time was a mechanic, worked at the Wawa mine. I hope I got Rudy's name right; I believe it was Rudy Konegan.

It's a lot of years ago. Rudy basically came to me and said: "Gilles, my employer wants to go to cross-trading. They're going to say to me that I've got to go and do the job of an electrician to a certain extent when I'm called upon to do it." You know what they did to Rudy? They sent him into a substation in Wawa at the iron ore mine operated by Algoma, I guess it would be, had him go in and clean out a substation.

Most people say: "What's so complicated about taking a broom and going to clean out a substation? You don't need a lot of skill sets to take a bit of dust off the floors of an MCC unit or off the top of a bunch of MCC — how much training do you need for that: a day, two days maybe if you're quite lucky?" Do you know what happened to him? He went and cleaned that and never walked back out again. He got electrocuted because he didn't understand the danger of what he was working with. It's not because Rudy was an unsafe worker; it's not because Rudy was trying to take a shortcut. It's because Rudy wasn't trained in the skills necessary to work safely around high-voltage equipment, and he died.

As a journeyman, I had apprentices with me when I worked in mining. I'll give you one example. I had an apprentice at one time, a first-year apprentice. Same story. My supervisor says to me, "Gilles, have him go in and clean the substation and the link house and the crusher station." I says, "Bill, I ain't sending that guy in there; he's dangerous. I've worked with this guy for about three weeks. I'm sure that if he can find a way to get himself hurt, he will." He didn't have the skill sets necessary. The employer tried to force me to do it. I refused under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

They gave him another job cleaning something else, which was the top of a crane. He was on top of a crane trying to clean off the insulators and forgot to turn off the power. He grabbed a 550-volt tri-line cable off a crane. Luckily for him there happened to be a box underneath that was protecting one of the top ends of the conveyor belt. When he got electrocuted, he managed to pull himself away and drop only about 20 feet on to the box. He didn't get hurt too bad. He only dislocated his shoulder and broke his knee. According to the employer, it wasn't a bad thing. This guy had injuries for a period of time and the employer ended up paying lost time, but in the end the situation could have been a heck of a lot more serious.

I only point that out because if this government says cross-trading, multi-skilling, deskilling is a good thing and it don't mean anything, let me tell you: It means a hell of a lot. You cannot have people who are unqualified to do what is very skilful work and very meticulous work that needs a certain amount of training to do.

I'm not a mechanic. You try to send me to do something with a pump and say: "Gilles, it's not a big deal. You know how to disconnect the wires. Go and take the belts off and then put another shiv on there and put another flywheel and everything will work fine." Wow. Can you imagine what kind of danger I could do with that? I'll blow the whole head end of the pump if I don't know what

I'm doing. Mechanics, millwrights are trained to do that kind of work — machinists, all of them, the same thing.

When this government tries to tell us, "This is merely in order to give an opportunity for young people to have better work and go into industry and get jobs in the multi-skilled trades," give me a break. This is about saving the employer some money. This, Mike Harris's bill, is, "I'm sucking up to industry to give them an opportunity to cut some wages." That's what this is all about.

The other thing they want to do is to deregulate the wage rate for apprentices. I was fortunate. I went through the system. When I was hired as a first-year apprentice, there was a ratio of what I should be paid as compared to a journeyman electrician. Then as I progressed through the apprenticeship program, my wage rate increased according to where I was within my apprenticeship.

The government will say: "That's a terrible thing. The employer has to pay too much." Excuse me. If the employer's got to pay me some dollars, they're going to make darn sure they are getting something out of me, so they're going to train me. They're going to put me with the best journeyman they can so they can get me making money for them as quickly as they can as they're paying me that rate. Same thing in the building trades. But this government says: "Oh, no. This is good for business. This will create more jobs." It's not going to create more jobs. All it's going to do in the end is lower the cost to certain employers.

Mr Lessard: Maybe some minimum-wage jobs.

Mr Bisson: Minimum-wage jobs. But I have to say there are employers out there who are quite concerned about what this government is doing. I have to put on the record that it's not every employer across the province who agrees with what this government is doing when it comes to the apprenticeship training program. There are a number of employers who are saying, "Hey, in the long run Bisson's right," as far as my argument; they haven't said that to me personally. "In the end, we will become more uncompetitive because we will have less skilled, less trained people doing the work. This is maybe going to cost us more money when it comes to compensation premiums. Overall, we're not going to fare any better as industry."

Our economy is based on what? It's based on a properly and well trained set of workers within our workplaces. We cannot compete with the Mexicos of this world or with Taiwan. They pay people dirt-cheap wages, lots of workers. If they kill four or five a week, it don't matter; just bring four or five more in and away you go. Eventually you'll get your product out. Ontario's economy doesn't work that way. The sooner this government figures that out, the better off we're going to be. We are a high-wage, high-skilled economy. Get that through your heads. That's what this is all about.

What you guys are trying to do is make us compete with Mexico. You'll never compete with Mexico by deregulating trades and pushing people down to minimum wage, because I'll tell you what: Their wages are even lower. What kind of an economy would we have in Ontario if we were paying people the wages that they get

in Mexico and Taiwan? People couldn't afford to buy cars, Ski-doo's, cottages, all the things that keep this economy going. Get it in your head: We're a high-wage, high-skilled economy. Please react that way.

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The other thing the government wants to do — this is really dangerous — is deregulate the ratio of journeymen with apprentices. The government will say, "I'm the minister and I say this is a good thing, because that way we can get more young people into the workplace." Excuse me. Can you see industry, some of whom are irresponsible employers — not all, because there are some responsible employers and I can think of a number of them. As a matter of fact, the company I was with, Pamour, was pretty good at that.

Mr Lessard: Chrysler is responsible.

Mr Bisson: Chrysler was responsible. They do it right. Why? Because by and large, unionized employers make sure that those things get done.

But do you know what's going to happen, especially in the non-union sector? I can see it in the building trades first. They're going to say, "We're going to build a cogen station." I just can see this coming. They're going to say: "There's an opportunity somewhere along the pipeline. We're going to build a cogeneration station, and this legislation says I don't have to have a one-to-one ratio or a two-to-one ratio," depending on where people are in their apprenticeships and how many tradespeople you've got. They're going to say, "We're going to save money." Rather than paying \$22.50 — what is the rate now for an electrician? Quickly. Three to one is the ratio. So they will not have to pay basically for a number of electricians.

This is how it works now: It says you have one apprentice to three journeymen. That makes sure the apprentice is protected by the skill sets of the journeymen and that the journeymen are properly supervising the work of the apprentice, making sure that the equipment being installed by the building trades is done right and, once installed, properly maintained.

The government says: "We're going to get rid of that ratio. We're going to deregulate it." Do you know what that means? It means that soon the employer will be able to say, "Ten apprentices, one journeyman." Can you imagine what's going to happen on some of these job sites? There are all kinds of fly-by-night wannabe contractors, not the professional ones, because by and large they're trying to do right, but there are wannabes out there who are going to say: "I'm going to go out and undercut Bluebird Construction. I'm going to get the mechanical work and electrical work up in Hearst where they're doing some work, and I'm going to show that Bill Moffat guy I'm smarter than he is. I'm going to walk in with a whole bunch of one- and two-year apprentices who don't have the skill sets that are required." You'll end up with, let's say, four apprentices to one journeyman.

Do you think that's off? I don't think that's off. I think it's pretty close.

Mr Lessard: Maybe some self-employed apprentices.

Mr Bisson: Or some self-employed apprentices as well. That's the other side of it. But what you're going to end up with are some unqualified people —

The Deputy Speaker: I would caution the member not to involve others in your debate. You're protected by our rules, but they aren't, and I might have to enforce those. Thank you.

Mr Bisson: I'm trying to engage the government in this debate. I was looking at the rump over here, because they're paying attention very closely to what I'm saying. There are Conservatives on this side, and that's who I'm looking at, to try to get them to understand that what they're doing is dangerous.

Mr Baird: We're listening. I'm listening.

Mr Bisson: Back to the ratios. What's going to end up happening is that you're going to have some wannabe contractor, and you know it, because what ends up happening is, to get a contract you've got to bid low. How do you bid low? You've got to control costs in some way, and one of the ways you can do that is by what? By cutting wages. Then you're going to say: "Three apprentices or four apprentices to one journeyman, and instead of paying \$22.50 an hour, I'll pay \$15.60 or \$13.12. That undercuts Bill Moffat and Bluebird Construction by so much. I've got the contract."

Then they go in to do the work and there's hell to pay. The equipment will not be properly installed, because apprentices, on their own without being properly supervised by journeymen, quite frankly are not properly trained to do the work that has to be done in installation. Or you're going to end up in a situation at Kidd Creek Mines or Placer Dome or Mallette waferboard or wherever it is where the employer after a while says: "We're having to compete with lower world prices. We've got to cut prices in some way. We've had three journeymen leave and go somewhere else or retire. We're going to replace them by lower-skilled workers," on some sort of haphazard apprenticeship training program, and they're going to try to save dollars.

What's that going to mean? It's going to mean unsafe workplaces, and quite frankly, in the long run, it's going to mean an added cost to the employer by having both shoddy work done if not properly supervised and having an unsafe workplace.

I tell you, the government can talk the line all they want. In the end, all this thing is doing is making it possible for people to come into industry and into the construction trades and not ensure that we have the quality of workmanship that we have today and the safety that we have today in those industries.

I want to come back to a point I made in the beginning. I know the Liberals don't like it when we talk about their federal cousins in Ottawa, but the federal government has a responsibility, and I want, once, our federal government, the Jean Chrétien Liberals, to say, "We buy into the apprenticeship training program in Ontario and we buy into the college training system in Ontario," and to properly fund those. If they don't do that, then I think it's a great disservice to this province.

I also tell this government you're the only government that has not gone to the federal government to negotiate an agreement around the apprenticeship training program. What the federal government wants to do is use the surplus within the EI fund to be able to fund the apprenticeship training stuff. I say it would be a hell of a lot better for us to use the surplus from the EI fund in order to train apprentices in this province — I wouldn't argue all of it, because we should be making sure that people are properly compensated once unemployed and not kicked off the system because of the rules that the federal Liberals have invented — than to give people a stupid tax break here in Ontario or to advocate, as I heard Mike Harris say, taking the surplus from the EI fund and forcing it back into a tax cut for people who are paying taxes to the federal government.

I say two things to the provincial government:

Do your responsibility. Sit down with the federal government. Negotiate the fairest deal you can in order that we can tap into that surplus of the EI fund and redirect those dollars back to the province so that we can support our apprenticeship training program. That's the very least you can do.

Number two, this bill is going in the opposite direction to that which the province has to go, so we need to have public hearings on this. We need to have an opportunity for people to come forward and to say what they think. Those hearings should not be three days as you have been doing normally; there should be extensive hearings on it.

The last point I want to make is that the minister is giving himself way too many powers in this bill. The minister is saying, "By way of regulation I will be able to regulate the trades altogether without anybody being the wiser, because all of it will be done behind the closed doors of the cabinet room." You cannot give yourself those kinds of powers, especially when you're trying to ram this bill through the House without doing the proper consultation that has to be done at the committee level.

I look forward to the responses from the government as they finally come to their senses for once in the last three years.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions? The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara South.

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): Thank you, Mr Speaker. We're both pleased to rise today in response to the comments of the member for Cochrane South.

Probably the most interesting thing in his comments was his description of the Conservative government as a bunch of grey-haired old men. Speaking on behalf of the old man club over here, I would ask the young whipper-snapper to have some respect for his elders, because even for old men like myself, I can come up with some pretty good new tricks.

I'll tell you one of the new tricks I'm very proud of. Let's list them off, and we'll compare our new tricks to those of the young backwoodsman from Cochrane South.

First, 300,000-some-odd new jobs across Ontario compared to the NDP record of I think it was negative-10,000 jobs.

It's interesting too that they're putting their training program, widely known as Jokes Ontario, up against our achievements in terms of 300,000-plus jobs, the biggest drop in the welfare rates in years, more than 200,000 people off welfare, moving into the workforce.

Again, I think we do have to brag about our new trick, Better Skills, More Jobs: Ontario's Plan for Tomorrow's Job Market, the plan to help create jobs and make sure people are trained for these jobs. In fact, the goal of this bill is to increase the number of entrants to apprenticeship programs from 11,000 to 22,000. If people watching at home are interested in obtaining this booklet, call 1-800-387-5514. Those at home can join in and see the Conservative government's plans, the new tricks of the old dogs to create and to build on the 300,000 jobs created across the province so far compared to Jobs Ontario and negative-10,000.

Mr Cullen: I'm here to stand and comment on the remarks made by the member for Cochrane South, but I have to compliment the member for Niagara South. He is the first member of the government to avail himself of free advertising time compared to the \$6 million of taxpayers' money that has been spent this year on funding educational propaganda. He gets the award of the night for using public air time to promote yet another propaganda piece, but at least the taxpayer isn't paying for it.

Coming back to the issues at hand here, the member for Niagara South talked about the 300,000 jobs that his government has created, and this bill, if I heard earlier, is supposed to help people get employment through better access to the apprenticeship program.

Why is it, then, that this government at the same time imposes tuition barriers? We know that as soon as you start making people pay for things and they start realizing, "Oh my God, can I afford this?" the people who are best able to utilize these programs will not be able to do so. As a matter of fact, if the member for Nepean had had to pay today's tuition charges when he went to university, would he be here today? Would he have been able to get his degree? We simply don't know. But the fact remains that every time tuition goes up, people have to make choices and people with skills, with ability, are forced away from their ability to pursue their future.

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Is this the hallmark of this government? Is this the way to increase skills, to increase jobs? This government is going to fail and fail miserably in achieving its Common Sense Revolutionary target of 750,000 jobs. You've got, what, a year and a half left of your mandate. You're not going to make it, and this program here, this Bill 55, is not going to help you. Think it over. Make it a better program. The people of Ontario deserve no less.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Guzzo: Rae sent them all to Buffalo, and he was part of the Rae government.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Member for Ottawa-Rideau, please come to order.

Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East): He is an old guy with grey hair over there.

Mr Bisson: Touché, or toupée, I should say.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Lessard: I want to express my sincere congratulations to the member for Cochrane South for his remarks. I think what he did was really narrow in on the important issues in Bill 55, and that is the massive deregulation of the apprenticeship program in Ontario, the elimination of standards and minimum requirements and also allowing tuition fees to be charged to apprentices and the lower wages that are going to be permitted to be paid for apprentices. He talked about competing with Mexico and Asia as far as wage rates. That's not going to get us anywhere. This is all just part of the Tory initiative, part of that race to the bottom, eliminating standards, reducing wages, all in the guise of reducing red tape but all to pay for their phony tax scheme.

But what is really needed to ensure that there are opportunities for young people to be encouraged to be involved in apprenticeship training is to make sure that there are jobs at the end. They need to have a positive outlook as far as jobs and know that they're going to be decent-paying jobs. But right now we have seen absolutely no commitment from this government as far as their job creation strategy. They said they were going to create 725,000 jobs and we have seen nothing like that.

We don't need any propaganda campaigns like the member for Niagara South is talking about. What we need is a job strategy. What we need is for the federal Liberal government to live up to their commitment to provide training for workers in Ontario. What we need are public hearings. What we need are the regulations to be tabled. We need to have an announcement on that tonight.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions? The member for Cochrane South has two minutes to reply.

Mr Bisson: Questions and comments or responses? I take it it's a response. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

I thank the members from the other two parties and my good friend Mr Lessard from Windsor for commenting. I just want to say again that I was hoping the government was going to stand and say at the very least that they were going to have some public hearings. I was hoping they were going to say, "We believe in democracy and we believe that people have to be heard." Not a word from the government. The government is basically remaining silent on that. We heard yesterday from one of the government members that they were going to do that, but no confirmation today. Tomorrow I will be at the House leaders' meeting, as the deputy House leader for our party, and I will be asking this government to make sure that we get some public hearings on this bill, no two ways about that.

The other thing I have to say to this government is, you are going down a very dangerous road by way of deregulating the apprenticeship training program in this province. Allowing multi-trading, allowing the ratios to be changed from journeymen to apprentices, allowing a lower wage structure for apprentices is a recipe for disaster both when

it comes to a safety aspect and also when it comes to the economic well-being of the employer.

I know there are employers out there who want to do the right thing. I can think of people like Bluebird Construction, Royal Oak Mines, Kidd Creek and a few others who are trying to do the right thing, but there are a lot of non-unionized employers out there, by and large, who are going to try to take advantage of this bill, if it passes, and we will end up with less-trained, less-qualified people doing the work in industry tomorrow after this bill is passed.

I've got to say to this government that this is wrong. I repeat, we are a high-wage economy based on high skills. When this government starts taking away those skill sets and taking away the ability to earn a good wage from workers, it is a recipe for both economic disaster and human disaster when it comes to this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Galt: It's a pleasure for me to be able to enter into the debate on Bill 55. Skills shortages that we're experiencing indicate a mismatch between the skills that employers want and the skills of job seekers. Bill 55 will ensure that apprenticeship training can bridge that situation effectively and efficiently.

Apprenticeship training prepares our young people for the job market. Bill 55 is really all about preparing our young people for the job market in the 21st century, and it's time we got on with this job. Change is certainly going to be needed to bring this about, as we look at an act that's been in place, the status quo, for some 34 years now. Our young people need jobs. Employers need skilled workers. We need to equip more young people with the skills to find a job.

Many in this House have regularly heard someone say, "I have two university degrees, or three university degrees, and I can't get a job." They have some tremendous training, they have some great skills, but they're not trained in an area that an employer is looking for. They have to match those skills with what employers are looking for out there or there are no jobs. It's understandable. What this bill will do is help match the skills that young people have with the needs of the employer, and that is indeed tremendously important.

We often hear about the need for tool and die makers, and what happens? We go to other countries and have them come in to do those jobs because they're not trained here for those kinds of skills. We hear that there is all kinds of work in the computer field, but they're not trained, and because of this bill they will be in the future. This will offer a tremendous improvement in the apprenticeship program and job skills in the future. Some 50% of the jobs are there for managerial, professional and technical jobs in the skilled trades and there will be roughly 50% between 1995 and the year 2005, during this particular decade.

There has been an alarm sounded that Ontario faces a shortage of skilled workers by organizations like the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association, the Canadian Advanced Technology Association and the Canadian

Federation of Independent Business. A letter written by Judith Andrew, the executive director for provincial policy from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, states:

"Concerning the new funding model, CFIB supports the objectives of creating an apprenticeship system that is both cost-effective and supportable in the long term as well as being equitable to all players. We appreciate that the government has acknowledged the tremendous financial and time commitment given by business to the system."

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The letter winds up saying:

"In summary, CFIB supports the proposed legislation for renewing the emphasis on vocational education as a realistic option for young people. Given the increasing skilled labour shortage in this province, it is a prime responsibility of government to create the necessary framework to permit young people to secure the training that will propel both their careers and the industries of the future."

From Dave Parke, automotive service technician on a provincial advisory committee:

"Reform of the apprenticeship system is long overdue. This legislation will provide new opportunities for apprentices. The system, as it now stands, with its outmoded regulations and requirements has ceased to meet the needs of employers and apprentices. This legislation brings the system into the '90s. Bill 55 will allow industry to adapt to changes such as new technologies and improve the quality of skilled trades."

Third and last, I'd like to quote from a letter from the Ontario Trucking Association:

"Re: OTA response to Bill 55.

"The Ontario Trucking Association supports the apprenticeship reform efforts as outlined in recent announcements made by the minister and contained in Bill 55. As transportation technology advances it becomes ever more critical to have sufficient technicians with the necessary skills in the workforce.

"This government has shown considerable willingness to create an apprenticeship model that is responsive to the needs of industry. OTA anticipates working with the ministry in implementing the reforms in the context of the regulations pertaining to restricted skill sets employed by the trucking industry."

It's unfortunate to find in a survey in 1997 that 35% of the companies had vacancies for skilled workers but the people out there, the young people, did not have the skills to fill those vacancies. In that survey, some 77% of the companies forecast that they will have an increase in demand for skilled positions over the next two years. Indeed, skills training is a real priority for this government and it's a real priority for a competitive labour force today. The result if we don't meet the skills challenge is that we will face some heavy economic costs, social costs, personal costs, lost productivity and unfilled potential.

Change is very necessary for these reasons as well as for the \$40 million that the federal government has cut out

of the apprenticeship programs. I would think that the provincial Liberals in Ontario would want to be doing something, would be lobbying with their first cousins in Ottawa, but it doesn't seem that they're really interested in supporting apprenticeship programs. They're happy to see that \$40 million drift down the drain and just let it go.

Presently, there are some 200 apprenticeship trades in Ontario. There are some 48,000 apprentices working for some 26,000 employers. There are about 517,000 certified skilled workers in Ontario's workforce. In my riding, in my area of Victoria-Haliburton, Peterborough and Northumberland, there are approximately 1,400 apprentices on the job right now. They require some 75% to 90% of their time. Their training is on the job and 10% to 25% is formal secondary school education. It's based on provincial standards developed by the industry. Provincial standards define specific skills that the apprentice must learn before being certified.

The present act that we are changing was last revised back in 1964, some 34 years ago. I hear a lot of complaints from the opposition, particularly from the NDP. You'd be rather surprised that they were there for five years and didn't do something about this particular act. In the last year they were here they only sat for some five weeks. They certainly had all kinds of time to do something, to bring in a bill that would revise the apprenticeship program.

The minister appoints various provincial advisory committees. There are some 30 of these committees in Ontario. They develop the training standards, the classroom curriculum, the exams and training standards, and are made up of an equal number of employee and employer representatives. The act now limits industry committees to providing advice only, even though their involvement is critical. They should be more involved than that. The act regulates some 200 skilled trades, of which 19 are compulsory.

The act unfortunately contains some unintentional barriers, interprovincial barriers and barriers to youth participation in these apprenticeship programs. It also contains a cumbersome process for designating a trade in Ontario as interprovincial. It undermines labour force mobility, and the act is often inconsistent with its regulations. As a result, we have to bring in ad hoc measures that have been going on for some 30 years.

The bill that we're putting forth is about preparing our young people for the 21st century. Certainly the time has come, and it's not too soon, for Bill 55. It could have been brought in in the early 1990s, when the NDP didn't have too much to do in their last year, and it's here to bring the Ontario apprenticeship system up to date. The regulations in the current apprenticeship legislation are indeed too rigid to meet the needs of a competitive economy and a wide range of employers. There is no question that today's industry needs the flexibility so they can change from time to time rather than be held in this rigid system that came in in 1964.

We've been accused that with this bill standards will drop. I think what the opposition is looking at is "one size

fits all," when we know that one size doesn't fit all. That old cookie-cutter approach just does not work and they seem to have difficulty bringing a little bit of flexibility into the system.

The apprenticeship system serves a wide range of industries and sectors. During the consultation with training partners the government listened to many groups and people involved in apprenticeship training. I was particularly impressed when I chatted with the member for Wentworth North when he was parliamentary assistant for education, the extensive consultation that was carried out for this bill to look at apprenticeship training and how it was being used in Ontario and the direction it should go.

Extensive consultation has been a hallmark of this government. We've had more committee time than any other party in government. They keep criticizing that we're not consulting, when in fact we've consulted far more than the previous NDP government or the previous Liberal government.

The message this government heard loud and clear during the consultation was that it's time for change. It's time to replace 30-year-old legislation. It's time to clear away the unnecessary red tape, to encourage more employers to train, and it's time to give industry greater input for setting training standards. At the same time, it's time to reaffirm the government's commitment to high-quality training and to ensure high standards and safety for employers, workers and consumers. It's also time to provide employers with the ability to focus training on our skills for specific jobs.

I'd like to give you an example that we all experienced in the early part of this government and the reason that flexibility is really needed. A few years ago our highways were plagued with poorly maintained trucks, flying truck wheels being a very deadly highway hazard. I'm sure that everyone in this House will recall the headlines we were seeing in the media about flying truck wheels injuring and killing people. Something had to be done, and our government moved quickly with the industry and with trainers to create special training for the installation of wheels and rims. Higher standards were introduced. Improved skills training, along with tough law enforcement, tamed a very deadly menace. A targeted apprenticeship training program helped to make our highways safer. What happened? More employers were training, we got rid of some of the red tape and we focused on skills and on safety.

The major goals that we're looking at and that would be achieved with the passing of Bill 55 are that more employers will be training, there will be less red tape and the focus will be on skills and safety. Also we'll be aiming to double the number of apprentices out there, and we'll be matching the skills of job seekers with the employer's skill requirements.

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Bill 55 would also provide the framework through which a revived Ontario youth apprenticeship program would flourish. It would help provide more opportunities for young people to train for good jobs in skilled trades and complete high school.

This government has brought in a tremendous number of reforms that have improved education over the last three years. It's going to set us into the 21st century as we move along.

We've heard from university professors saying that the quality of students arriving at university has been deteriorating. We've been doing a lot of things to improve that. We've been coming out with standardized report cards. From the time I was on a board of education back in the late 1970s, it's something that parents have been asking for, standard report cards: "I'd like to know how they compare. I'd like to have some consistency across the province."

Now, with a standardized report card designed by the teaching profession, we have that very thing in place, a tremendous improvement in education along with regular testing in grade 3, and now we're bringing it in in grade 6. It tests not only the students but the school and the system and the board. We know who is doing well and we can reward excellence. At the same time we can also identify where there are some problems and try and improve on some of those difficult situations that teachers and/or students and/or schools may have. It's not meant to be a witch hunt. It's meant to reward excellence and also assist those who are having difficulties.

There's been a lot of talk about the updating of curriculum. We move from back in the early 1970s, when each teacher designed their own curriculum, to when each school designed their own and then each school board designed their own. The public have been asking for a consistent curriculum all across the province. A few people seem to think that politicians have been designing this curriculum. Not at all; it's been the teachers themselves who have designed the curriculum and it's gone over extremely well. I have a daughter who's a vice-principal and she thinks this new curriculum that's out is the best thing since sliced bread.

With Bill 160, we've brought in requirements for more teacher time with students and limiting the average class size, something that's been way overdue for some time. The previous governments were happy with pupil-teacher ratio and administration could siphon off all kinds of people to use for their purposes. Teachers just weren't in the classrooms. The number and size of classes just kept getting bigger and bigger as the result of negotiations. The union kept looking to siphon off the dollars to their own benefit.

All of those things, along with Bill 55, are doing a tremendous amount to improve education in Ontario, to help our students be in a better position to get jobs in the future. In the competitive society we live in, that's what it's about, having our students, our graduates able to do a better job than most of the other countries that we're competing with. We need to have those kinds of products going out or we don't compete. It was talked about a few minutes ago that this is a country with high-paying jobs and high skill sets, but if we're not doing the training, we're just not going to be in that particular position.

For many reasons I'm proud to support second reading of Bill 55. I certainly urge all members on both sides of this House to join me in supporting this legislation, in supporting legislation that, if it's passed, would provide opportunity for our young people, in supporting legislation that would help employers keep pace with the global economy and in supporting this legislation that would provide a passport to jobs, opportunity and growth.

Bill 55 is about preparing our young people for the job market of the 21st century. Indeed it's a bill that I believe is long overdue: An Act to revise the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act. I believe that once this bill is passed and in place we're going to double the number of apprentices who are in training. We'll get more people with the kind of skill sets that are needed to land the kind of jobs that are available in this country. There are a lot of jobs out there. Young people have not had enough of the proper skill sets to be able to go and land those jobs. I see Bill 55 as a bill that, once it's passed, will help to prepare our young people for the job market of the 21st century.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Cullen: I listened to the comments from the member for Northumberland with interest. I know that all members of this House here want to ensure that there are opportunities for our young people to get jobs and contribute to our society. I know it's the object of all members of this House here to ensure that we have in place the policies to improve the quality of life in our community in Ontario.

When I hear the member opposite say that this government has engaged in consultation, I then have to wonder why, when this government was supposedly engaging in consultation, the report was written before the consultations finished. I have to ask myself if there's a difference here between rhetoric and reality. Are we not all sharing the same common objective? Why would the report be written before the consultations are finished?

Then we see the bill before us. Members on this side of the House have asked to ensure that there are public consultations because the government knows full well that the wisdom out in the community is greater than what can be found on the government benches. There's an opportunity here to perfect the bill. We have pointed out, and others have pointed out, some of the barriers to the very objectives this government is seeking.

This government is seeking to ensure that young people have the ability to go into the apprenticeship program to get the skills Ontario needs. Yet people in the industry, in the working professions, out in the community, have pointed out various things that would work against the government's very laudable objectives. Why won't the government commit itself today to hold those public consultations, to send the bill to committee so we can hear how to ensure that we can achieve the government's, and indeed this House's objectives? All of us here want the program to succeed.

Is the government willing to listen to those who can provide that advice? Give us that commitment today, would you please.

Mr Lessard: It was interesting to hear the member for Northumberland express that waving some kind of a magic wand was going to make all of our wishes come true, that saying we were going to create more spaces for apprentices and increase participation of young people getting involved in apprenticeships was somehow going to make it all come true.

I ask the member: How is it that reducing wages and increasing tuition fees for young people is going to encourage more people to become apprentices? We know that under the current system there is a shortage of people, especially in the Windsor area, in areas like tool and die making and mould-making. It's been a chronic shortage for years. How is this system that's being proposed going to encourage more young people to become tool and die makers. I'd like to hear him address that.

He talks about how rigid the current system is right now and says that we need to provide some more flexibility. The translation means: reducing standards, reducing wages, putting health and safety at risk. I don't think that's the right way to go.

It's interesting to hear this government arguing against rigid standards when it comes to apprenticeship training, but when it comes to funding for schools, rigid formulas are OK. It's going to lead possibly to the closing of schools in Windsor like Lowe and Walkerville. In a lot of rural areas, schools are going to close because of that rigid approach to funding formulas in schools. What we need is to either go back to the drawing board and start over again, consult with the stakeholders — meaningful consultations — or at least commit tonight to having public hearings on this bill.

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Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): It's always a pleasure to rise and make some comments when the member for Northumberland makes a speech in the House. As I listened to what he said — he talked about doubling the number of apprenticeships available in the province, he talked about more opportunities for our young people — I couldn't help but think about the situation that exists in my riding and my own experience where I employed many automotive technicians. We were always desperately short of automotive technicians in the town of Wallaceburg, which is famous for its mould-making companies and its tool and die shops and there was always a need to go overseas to find technicians to work in those shops. I often hear about the city of Windsor with its hospitality industry and its desperate need for chefs and sous-chefs. At the same time I hear about our young people, especially those living on the streets, and one distinguishing characteristic of many of them is their lack of skills and their lack of training. At the same time that we have skilled jobs going wanting for workers in our province, we have young people to whom somehow we just have not been able to give the training.

We can talk about the old system. The old system did not work. We had ample evidence all across the province where it didn't work. We need to do some things to change the apprenticeship system so that organized labour

and management, government and the educational system all participate, along with the apprentices themselves, so that everyone participates in providing training for these young people that will lead them to productive jobs, will lead them to a productive life in our province rather than a life that many of them are committed to now of a bit of education but no training and no jobs.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I'm glad to have an opportunity to comment on the remarks by the member for Northumberland. I was listening to him wax on about Bill 160 and some of the changes to curriculum and some of the other aspects and how important he thought it was. I'm sure he means what he says, but it seems quite ironic when one looks at some of the aspects of this bill. For example, the elimination of minimum education standards in this bill gives us some concern and should give him some as well, so it seems to be wanting it both ways. I think this only speaks to the fact that we need to look at various elements of this legislation and make some important amendments, and indeed public hearings are something that should take place. We know that the member for Simcoe Centre yesterday indicated there would be public hearings, and I think it's important that the minister confirm that. That aspect is an incredibly important part of it.

Again, you talk about your educational goals and some of the things you plan to do and you conveniently forget to talk about the aspect of tuition fees, and the fact is that you're going to be in essence making accessibility more difficult for those who are trying to have apprenticeship training. This is truly an issue of accessibility. You say it is and I think we say it is. The important thing to note is that there are a number of barriers to accessibility that are set up in this piece of legislation that concern us a great deal. I trust that you'll recognize those barriers are there in the legislation. If it is indeed about accessibility, I think you've got to recognize there certainly is not a great deal of trust about the aspect of tuition fees. We have watched this government and the previous government increase tuition fees to an alarming degree, so certainly accessibility is something where the definition has truly changed. If that's what happens as a result of this legislation as well, we've got to have some great concerns.

There are other aspects of the bill. The deregulation of the mandated wage rate is a great concern. If people end up ultimately being forced to survive on minimum wage, they may have real difficulty.

I hope you will confirm that public hearings will take place and that you will recognize there are some changes needed to the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Northumberland has two minutes to respond.

Mr Bisson: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: You would know that the member for Northumberland is a veterinarian, and I would like to move a motion that we deregulate the veterinary profession to see how he would vote on that motion.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: Thanks to those who have responded, particularly the member for Chatham-Kent, who supported the problems we have identified with this particular bill: the shortage of automotive technicians and having to bring them in from overseas, and talking about the kids on the street lacking skills to be able to get jobs. That's exactly what Bill 55 is all about.

It's interesting to hear the member for Port Arthur and the member for Windsor-Riverside talking about the increase in tuition fees. Here we have a party that doubled spending during their term. Then we have a party that doubled the debt during their term. There's \$9 billion to \$10 billion a year going out in interest because they were into taxing, spending and borrowing, doubling the debt, doubling the spending. Imagine what that \$9 billion to \$10 billion would do for education in this province if those dollars weren't going out in interest because of your mis-handling of the economy of this province.

Here is a party that during its term, five years, lost 10,000 jobs, net 10,000 jobs disappeared. They talk about Ontario doing well — "Oh, that's because of the international economy." But what's happening to the NDP government in BC? Companies want to move out. Small business wants to move out. What about Saskatchewan? The same thing. The health costs have gone out of sight. The lineups in hospitals have gone out of sight. Why? Why are there no jobs there? The NDP government's philosophy of tax to the limit, let the debt go, borrow all you can and just drive the jobs out of the country. They're just pleading to bring in some responsible government both in Saskatchewan and in BC. If I had a little more time, I'd talk about the provincial Liberal governments.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Duncan: I ask unanimous consent to share this 20-minute period with my colleague from Ottawa Centre.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? It is agreed.

Mr Duncan: I want to speak to this bill. I've had the opportunity to meet with a number of the various unions that have an interest in this, as well as employers, and I want to talk about the substance of the bill and about some of the debate that went on here earlier tonight.

First of all, I think we're all in agreement that the apprenticeship system was in need of a massive overhaul. This need has been characterized, I might say, by the auto industry in my community, by the tool and die industry, the plastic injection mould industry. Most recently, one of the members opposite cited the shortage of chefs and sous-chefs at the Windsor casino. In fact, as recently as last month Casino Windsor was advertising in Asian trade papers to get new chefs.

When you proceed with legislative change of this magnitude, I think you have to get off the polemics and you have to focus in on the facts.

Mr Bisson: Have you got a dictionary? I want to know what "polemics" means.

Mr Duncan: One of the issues that hasn't been raised tonight is the quality of our workforce. I read an interesting discourse last evening that said Ontario industry has the highest numbers of ISO 9000 certifications of any

jurisdiction in North America. What does that mean? That means that by and large this province has the highest standards of all. I think that's the result of a number of things. One of those things is the high quality of our skilled trades in this province and how they work.

There are a number of changes to the bill that I think ought to be reviewed quickly. The elimination of the journeyman-to-apprenticeship ratio: That replaces the regulated ratios with voluntary guidelines for employers. What does that mean? That means less supervision for those in training. What does that do?

Mr Bisson: Poleaxe, polecat...polemics.

Mr Duncan: You need to be able to spell it properly, Gilles, in order to look it up in the dictionary.

The regulated ratios replaced by the voluntary guidelines means there will be less supervision. What does that mean? That means lower quality. One of our competitive advantages, I would argue to the government — and government members put a compelling case around the need for Ontario to be competitive in a whole variety of fields. That will lower quality and lower standards. So I say to the government the bill is flawed in that area.

The deregulation of mandated wages for apprentices: The legislation removes mandated wage rates. What does that mean? It means we don't put as high a value on our apprentices as we should. Government members will argue, "We'll let the market look after that." It won't work. The reason we've evolved this system and the reason successive governments haven't touched that is because of the nature of the apprentice system itself.

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The removal of the minimum education standards: The current standard was the minimum grade 10 in the regulations. Now there will be no standard — well, we don't know for sure, because we haven't seen the regulations, the government won't share the regulations. I submit that before a proper debate on this legislation and its impact can be held, those regulations ought to be distributed.

The bill allows part-time contract self-employed workers to become apprentices. There are real concerns about supervision and training of those who would be there only on a part-time basis. Again I say to the government members, trying to speak in your terms, quality is an important component of competitiveness. When you look under the hood of a Ford Motor product in this province and you look at where the engine was built, if the engine was built in Ontario versus Cleveland, the quality of the product will be higher. That's acknowledged in the industry. It's acknowledged by anybody who has built those engines, as I have. I say to the government members, when you tinker, when you tamper, when you undermine the system the way you are with Bill 55, you threaten that.

Changing the role of the provincial advisory councils: You really don't define a new role in terms of enforcement of standards. Again it's a standards question and it's a competitiveness question. When we lower our standards, we lower our competitive ability. It's important to have a highly trained, well-supervised apprenticeship program

with motivated workers, which we have had, in order to remain competitive.

What will be the impact of tuition fees? I think we all understand that it lessens accessibility at a time when we ought not to be lessening accessibility. The government has not been clear about what those levels of fees will be or how they will be paid. They said they'll set up different assistance plans for apprentices. The government's record on post-secondary tuition should be a very good indication that those tuition rates are going to be high and are going to rise quickly. So there is the question of accessibility.

The issue of the minister making changes through regulation: The legislation will allow the minister to make regulations concerning industrial committees, programs, criteria for certification, recognizing the qualifications, once again a concentration of power in the hands of the minister. We're not surprised by that because of the government's overall track record in this area of concentrating power in the hands of ministers, but we believe as an opposition that this is not in the best interests of the province.

The government is trying to construct an argument that they have consulted far and wide. My colleague from Ottawa West pointed out that the contents of the legislation were written and disseminated in a leaked document prior not only to the consultations finishing but prior to the consultations beginning. This notion that we have had a broad and wide consultation is simply not accurate.

I want to address two other issues. The question of a 1996 federal budget announcement: At that time the federal government announced they'd be withdrawing their EI contribution and offered in place the skills loan and grants program as part of a move to transfer training to the provinces.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Encouraged by the provinces.

Mr Duncan: This, by the way, was asked for and encouraged by the provinces. I hope the federal government doesn't sign an agreement with the Harris government. That in my view would be a serious mistake. What we need before that kind of an agreement is signed is a meaningful commitment to apprenticeship in a system that will establish high standards and high qualifications.

It's amusing that the NDP would want the federal government to enter into an agreement with the Harris government. In the housing area they don't want the federal government to enter into an agreement on the downloading of co-op housing. I guess all that whooshing tonight is the sound of sucking and blowing by the NDP.

In conclusion, before I yield the floor to my colleague, we all agree that there is a need to reform the apprenticeship program. The challenge is in the detail; the devil's in the detail. The detail of this bill tells me that this is a recipe that (1) will undermine the quality of not only our training but finally the end product, and (2) will ultimately lead to a diminution of Ontario's competitive position in the global economy.

I ask my colleagues opposite in the government to reconsider this legislation and give some thought to bringing

in meaningful change that will give real opportunity to young people and allow us as a province to maintain our competitiveness in this world economy.

Mr Patten: I'd like to carry on and compliment my colleague from Windsor-Walkerville. I think he gave a very astute analysis, and some of my other colleagues as well who have pointed out numerous things.

I believe that what is most important, and you've heard this by members on this side of the House, that comes from employers and from employees and federations and advisory councils is the importance of hearings. The importance of hearings of course is to listen. It's that part of the democratic process where you supposedly listen to the stakeholders or people who have a point of view or something to offer.

Seeing that in the consultation process before the general consensus seems to be there wasn't too much listening, this is now quite important, as a matter of fact so important that within a day, within 24 hours, what do we have but letters to the minister. This particular letter is from James Moffat, who is in the House this evening from the Ontario Sheet Metal Workers' and Roofers' Conference and is the training and trades coordinator.

He says on behalf of his particular conference, "I would like to thank you for agreeing to have public hearings on Bill 55, An Act to revise the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act. Last evening...in the Legislature Mr Joe Tascona, PC, MPP for Simcoe Centre, acknowledged during the debate that public hearings will be held." He went on to quote. This is a quote from the member for Simcoe Centre. I won't read the whole thing because it would take too long: "There will be public hearings and the unions can have their say in the normal process. The bottom line is, when you're dealing with that type of approach, the unions have been a part of this process and, as far as I'm concerned, they'll continue to be a part of the process."

James Moffat wasn't the only one who sent a letter. There was another letter sent by Dan Lyons, chairperson for the provincial labour-management health and safety committee, and the co-chair, Bryon Black, which asked for the same thing and an opportunity to make sure — the provincial labour-management health and safety committee, which is very concerned about the impact of Bill 55, will have a health and safety conference and this conference, this special meeting, will be held on November 4. They will be reviewing this bill in the light of health and safety. They're asking that this bill not be passed in totality before that conference takes place.

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We're told that the consultations have already happened, but I implore the government to listen. As a matter of fact, I would ask that the member for Middlesex, who is the parliamentary assistant — I don't know if he's in the House at the moment.

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): He's right here.

Mr Patten: He's right here. He's standing up there. The member for Middlesex — the minister has not yet appeared — seems to be carrying the ball. Perhaps in one

of the two-minute responses, the member for Middlesex will confirm that indeed there will be hearings and an opportunity for those who have a stake, a very serious stake and an important part to play in the improvement of quality in this province, to put on the record their views.

I'm not going to address the issues that have already been raised by most members, the deregulation of wage rates, the adequate supervision, the accessibility issues etc, except to say that there is enough information from all sides — the government likes to talk about unions. In many of these instances, we're not talking about unions. Many of these councils are made up of employers and employees. Is that not correct, Mr Moffat? Yes, they are. These are made up of the people who have to carry out these responsibilities. They are saying to you, come back and take a second look at some of these things.

Most would agree with your objectives. Most members, if not all, would agree with the objective of increasing the standards of our workforce in all the trade areas, in all the disciplines. I think everyone would agree. But what, I ask, is the sign of a good manager? A good manager, in my experience — and I place the government in this position. The government is charged with managing the Legislature and managing legislation that it puts forward. One of the most crucial elements of a good manager is, yes, to put out a viewpoint, but second, to listen and to incorporate ideas. The concept that a manager can do everything by himself or herself is nonsense. It's an old-style thing; it has gone out, gone out with sliced bread. The member for Northumberland talked about sliced bread. If you look at sliced bread, it's the worst bread you can eat nutritionally. It's all enriched and refined; take a look at it. It's a terrible analogy.

A sign of a good manager is one who incorporates ideas, listens very carefully and even says: "You know what? I'm going to change my mind on this because this will achieve my objectives better, the suggestion from party A or party B or individual A or individual B." I think people gain respect for people who manage in that fashion. They say that someone is big enough not to be so ideological and so convinced they're right that they cannot incorporate the views of others, especially when the views are coming from the stakeholders.

There's a pattern here that I think is important. We saw this with Bill 26. We saw this with Bill 31. There's sort of a déjà vu concept here, because I can remember the requests for hearings on Bill 31, and what happened? We didn't get them. So please accept the validity of some degree of nervousness on the part of stakeholders outside

the government who are worried that the government will not have hearings.

Of course the worry also is that more and more of the regulations, the decision-making around levels of wages, the ratio issues, the tuition areas etc, will not be made in the House, will not be made in public, will not be for all to see and hear and comment on. It will be done by the ministry and then by cabinet, by regulation. That is a pattern on almost every single major bill. What does that mean? It means there is a diminution of the role of this Legislature, which, in my opinion, diminishes the role of the people who are representing the people of Ontario, and I say this for all parties.

This is true; there's a pattern there. Responsible government means that the government should put forward its program, allow a chance for debate and a chance, often, for subsequent hearings, and — a tiny step — an opportunity that once those hearings are complete, you aren't given until just the next sessional day, by 10 o'clock in the morning, to respond to depositions, in numbers of 80 or 90, and draft in legalese your response to what you've heard from most of the depositions and presentations, which were very thoughtful; a chance to incorporate those. That makes sense. We hadn't heard that before. That is something that should be added.

This particular group may be affected adversely. Ah, the government hadn't thought of that. Here's a suggestion. Here's a way of getting around it. That's the beauty of the process, the absolute beauty of democracy, and yet it is undercut.

We have a Legislature in Canada that is employing closure and time allocation on every single major bill, more than any other Legislature, and we have the most undemocratic Legislature due to the rule changes of the House that this government brought in. I feel very embarrassed about that. I have to tell my constituents about that. Believe me, if there's a change in government, we are going to change that. Our leader, Dalton McGuinty, has said that he will bring about changes to make sure that this particular Legislature is redemocratized and modernized.

The Deputy Speaker: Your time has expired.

Mr Baird: He's promising to get rid of the rule changes.

The Deputy Speaker: Would you please find a seat.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): Give us five minutes.

The Deputy Speaker: No. Would you please take a seat. It being almost 9:30, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 2127.

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Jeudi 8 octobre 1998

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 8 October 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 8 octobre 1998

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LE JOUR COMMÉMORATIF DE L'HOLocauste

Mr Chudleigh moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 66, An Act to proclaim Holocaust Memorial Day — Yom ha-Shoah in Ontario / Projet de loi 66, Loi proclamant le Jour commémoratif de l'Holocauste — Yom ha-Choah en Ontario.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): I begin debate on my private member's bill, An Act to proclaim Holocaust Memorial Day — Yom ha-Shoah in Ontario. This bill speaks to human rights, civic and moral responsibilities and democratic freedoms, which are the threads that connect all cultural communities worldwide.

What can we do to stand in solidarity with our fellow citizens who experienced these events first-hand? What can we do to stop similar events, such as we are seeing in the Balkans right now, from happening again? We can provide a day for the citizens of Ontario to reflect on the past, to consider the present and to prepare for the future. We can commemorate the victims of the most terrible genocide in modern human history and hold it out as an example to all people from which to learn.

This bill, if passed by this House, will designate an annual day of the Holocaust, or Yom ha-Shoah, in Ontario. This date, Tuesday, April 13, 1999, will be determined by the Jewish calendar. This bill will also help us focus on all events where people have been systematically destroyed due to race, ethnic background, religion or physical or mental disabilities.

Six million Jewish Holocaust victims were systematically deprived of their human and political rights and murdered between 1933 and 1945. In this century alone, genocide has been perpetrated many times, including in Rwanda in Africa, in the Balkans today, by Stalin in Russia, Pol Pot in Cambodia and on the Armenian people.

During the Holocaust, not only Jews were targeted by the Nazis but people with physical or mental disabilities were killed. Others, including gypsies, were murdered because of their racial or religious background and still more because of their sexual orientation.

Canada, along with other Allied nations, took part in the armed struggle to defeat Nazism and its collaborators. The Holocaust was an event that has touched the lives of all citizens of Ontario, especially those who fought during the Second World War who helped to liberate the inmates of labour and concentration camps.

It is important to note that most of the Jewish Holocaust survivors who emigrated to Canada settled in Ontario. For these reasons alone, I believe it is entirely appropriate to establish a Holocaust Memorial Day — Yom ha-Shoah in Ontario to commemorate the victims of the Jewish Holocaust and other state-sanctioned genocides.

Further, such a day would also provide Ontarians with an opportunity to reflect on these events. Citizens of a multicultural Ontario need to understand the enduring and profound lessons that these events teach and see the consequences of ignoring them. The first lesson is, never again. Never again can the world allow a repeat of the Holocaust. We have seen all too recently in Africa and in the Balkans today the consequences of ignoring this most important lesson.

Another lesson is that we cannot discriminate on the basis of race, religion or disabilities. Jews and gypsies, as well as the disabled, were seen by the Nazis as a serious biological threat to the purity of the Nazi ideal of an Aryan master race.

A third lesson is the necessity for us to defend democracy. This European Holocaust began soon after Adolf Hitler moved to end democracy and institute himself as dictator. Jews were forced out of the universities and public sector jobs, they could not attend public schools, they could not go to the movies or vacation resorts and they couldn't walk in certain sections of the cities.

Attacks and boycotts on Jewish businesses gave way to destruction of synagogues and homes and eventually to physical attacks. By the time the war began, Jews were second-class citizens. It must not be forgotten that each turn in a sickening spiral of the Holocaust occurred as one by one their human rights were stripped away. The lack of true democratic freedoms paved the way for these atrocities to occur. This theme runs through all examples of state-sponsored genocide, including in Stalin's Russia, in Pol Pot's Cambodia and against the Armenians.

Where individuals do not have a direct stake in their own government, they often abrogate their civil and moral obligations as well. However, some people recognize these obligations even while facing their fear. At this point, I'd like to remember the heroism of Raoul

Wallenberg, Canada's only honorary citizen, who, as Swedish ambassador to Hungary during the time of the Second World War, saved the lives of over 100,000 Hungarian Jews and was himself deported to Russia by Soviet forces at the end of the war. To this day, we do not know the fate of Mr Wallenberg, whose granddaughter is a citizen of Ontario and resides in Toronto.

Another lesson we can learn is that citizens need to take an active role defending our society. These atrocities were carried out with the active help of local collaborators and the acquiescence or indifference of numerous bystanders. However, some bystanders, such as Mr Wallenberg, and members of various Resistance movements opposed the Nazi terror. There are other examples of heroism in these events, and let's hope that teaching the lesson of the Holocaust can inspire this kind of heroism in all of us.

The Nazi legacy was a vast empire of murder, pillage and exploitation. It is a legacy of ruined cities, lost generations and untold horrors. It is this legacy which must be understood by Ontarians as the price of a lack of interest in defending human rights and democracy and condoning racism and discrimination. The full magnitude of the Holocaust and its moral and ethical implications are only now beginning to be understood in full.

I'm convinced that an official provincial Holocaust Memorial Day — Yom ha-Shoah is an appropriate way to honour the memory of six million Holocaust victims. We can remember this event in union with Holocaust survivors living in Ontario and people around the world who have experienced similar horrors or are now defending themselves against them.

The international movement for human rights also has its origins in the moral issues raised by the Holocaust. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights came about as a direct result of that movement, as did in 1962 our own Ontario Human Rights Code.

Finally, the ideals of cultural harmony and respect in a multicultural society also derive from the Holocaust experience. Multiculturalism is an ideal our society derived from the Holocaust, which espoused racial and cultural superiority and oppression of minorities.

Furthermore I'm proposing, as I believe to be entirely appropriate, that we declare a provincial day in accordance with the Jewish religious calendar on which Yom ha-Shoah, the day of the Holocaust, is observed. That day in 1999 will fall on April 13.

I hope on that day people in Ontario will reflect on the lessons that we have learned. I hope people in Ontario will remember the victims of the Jewish Holocaust and also the victims of other genocides, lessons which have evidently not been learned by the people in the Balkans, who are practising a form of genocide based on ethnic background.

Of all these examples of genocide, none is more important to an individual than the one which affected them personally. The Jewish Holocaust of 1933-45 was arguably the cruellest and most premeditated in modern history. The declaration of a memorial day to the Holo-

caust will remind each of us of our personal commitment to human rights.

It's been a privilege and a pleasure for me to consult with the Canadian Jewish Congress, Ontario region, and with the Holocaust Education and Memorial Centre of Toronto, UJA Federation, throughout the development of this piece of legislation. I would like to also thank Keith Landy, chair of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Ontario region, Bernie Farber, the executive director, and the entire executive of the Canadian Jewish Congress for their support for this project. I would also like to acknowledge Moshe Ronen, the national president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, who is with us today.

I wish especially to thank Dr Carole Anne Reed, the director of education at the Holocaust Centre, and Hershel Sahian, the public policy coordinator of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Ontario region, for the many hours of their time, which they gave willingly to help me develop this bill.

I thank everyone who has attended here in this House this morning — and I look forward to hearing your comments — for your support on this important piece of legislation.

1010

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): It's an honour to speak to this bill. I will of course be supporting it.

I first want to comment on the importance of commemorating the Holocaust. As legislators, we have a responsibility to take a leading role in ensuring that not only do we use the phrase "Never again," but that we take that attitude and make sure it is imbued in legislation and actions of this province, ensuring that this type of inhumanity does not occur, that it is confronted at every step. Ensuring that we never forget the persecution of the Jewish community that did take place in the Holocaust will lead towards those kinds of goals.

I'd like to recognize the efforts of the Canadian Jewish Congress, UJA, the B'nai Brith, the Yad Vashem Foundation, the Holocaust Education and Memorial Centre of Toronto and many others. Representatives from those organizations are here today, along with many leaders of the Jewish community. I'd like to thank them for coming here and marking this occasion.

Given the events of the past few days in this House, it's important, as legislators, that we also commit to educating our children about discrimination and what it can lead to even in its extremes. This government has promised many organizations that it will ensure the Ontario curriculum is such that our children are educated about the Holocaust, yet I'm personally embarrassed that we discovered yesterday that the Ministry of Education, under the leadership of the minister, deleted anti-racism and anti-discrimination measures from the provincial curriculum. It's embarrassing to me as a legislator that there have been no steps to guarantee that our children are educated about the horrors of the Holocaust. I believe it should be entrenched in the curriculum, and I hope one day this minister and this government realize the importance of these measures.

I'd also like to comment, as the previous member did, on other instances of genocide. It was interesting to note that when Adolf Hitler was asked if he would be able to implement his final solution, his comment was, "Well, who remembers the Armenians?"

On April 24, 1915, a planned and systematic effort by the Young Turk regime was begun to eradicate the Armenian population in eastern Turkey. April 24 marked the 83rd anniversary of this event, an event, by the way, which has gone unrecognized by the Turkish government and much of the world. Until those types of recognitions are made, these wounds can never be healed, this type of action cannot be confronted.

It's critical that we learn the lessons from these kinds of events; obviously, as a people we haven't. We've seen events in the Balkans, in Rwanda; we've seen enforced famines. These are recent examples of a pattern of bloodshed and human tragedy that has taken place since those events in 1915.

I believe very strongly that recognition, however, is only a first step in ensuring that these events do not happen again. The Holocaust and other genocides and tragedies, instances of genocide, racism and discrimination, serve to remind us that we must work even harder to challenge hatred; we must work even harder to challenge racism and intolerance.

I am supporting Bill 66. I think it's an important first step but, as I said, a first step has to be measured and actions have to follow those steps. I think we can use a day in remembrance to speak up about these kinds of things and put our actions where our words are.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): First, let me indicate very clearly, very adamantly and without hesitation that we in the New Democratic Party caucus support this bill, this proposition, with great enthusiasm.

It's tragic — and I reflected on this as I was coming into Queen's Park this morning — that we're being forced, compelled to talk about what really is the unspeakable: the atrocity, the crime of the annihilation, the slaughter of six million Jews, along with so many others, along with political progressives; along with members of religious communities; along with the Roma, colloquially known as gypsy people; along with gays and lesbians; along with trade unionists.

The Holocaust, and the recognition and recall of that atrocity, must become an event — and this is where we agree so completely with this proposition — that becomes part of our community and our culture and our regular life here in this community of Ontario and across this country.

As we know and as has been noted, so many of those survivors, what there were, have come here to Ontario. We also know that these people are getting older and we are losing these people as living chroniclers of the horrible atrocity of the Holocaust. It then becomes incumbent upon us to ensure that that Holocaust is recalled and remembered and that we make a firm commitment to struggle to ensure that it indeed never happens again.

I suppose Holocaust Memorial Day is a day of reflection, a day of grieving, but it's also a day for celebration

of the courage of those people; the courage, for instance, of the 60,000 Jews left in Warsaw in April and May 1943. There had been 400,000 Jews contained in Warsaw, behind walls, and in April and May 1943, the 60,000 — that's all that was left — unarmed, stood together and stood against the Germans and their collaborators, under attack by flame-throwers, German troops, armoured cars and tanks.

We also have to recall that Allied governments did far too little to aid those Jews, be it those Jews in the Warsaw ghetto or in the Vilnius ghetto or in the Bialystok ghetto, along with so many others.

We also have to recall the tragedy, a very dark period in our own national history when this country not only didn't do as much as it ought to have done and could have done to assist those Jews who were rising up against Nazi oppression, but also didn't open our doors to those Jews who were in flight, seeking refuge outside of their own countries. It's an unpleasant recollection for us to have to make as Canadians, and there are other nations that have the same dark period in their own histories, but we have to recall how we shut doors to Jews whose fate was going to be, among others, the camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

1020

I was at Auschwitz-Birkenau a few years ago. Hundreds of thousands of people visit that place every year. I was among groups of people who were representative of every nation on this earth. I tell you, it's a grey, silent, solemn, sad and incredibly moving testimony to the reality of the Holocaust. Being a participant in that monument to oh, so many victims is something I would tell others is so compelling and indeed serves to etch in one's own consciousness the reality of that Holocaust.

I speak to that because you know there are people in our community who would dare deny the Holocaust and the death of six million Jews, along with so many others. The support of this bill and, as has been noted, the commitment to a recognition of that day in our Legislature, in our schools, in those places where people gather in communities across this province — the recognition of that day, a remembrance of that day, a taking heed of that day is, as it should be, an imperative message to those who still in our community would promote Naziism, Fascism, anti-Semitism, the irrational, perverted and distorted hatred that gave rise to and sustained the Holocaust in Europe, and indeed that gives rise to and sustains atrocities against humankind in other parts of the world and atrocities which persist and occur even in this day and in this time.

The recognition of a day of Holocaust memorial is a statement, an affirmation of the innocent lives — the children, the old people; it's just far too many, and one was too many — who suffered at the hands of hatred and anti-Semitism, racism, Naziism and Fascism, and must serve us as more than yet another day on the calendar, but must serve us as a commitment to reaffirming in our own country and in this province our respect and indeed our celebration of our cultural and religious and linguistic diversity, that should serve to remind us of the need to

keep our doors open as a country and as a community to people who in 1998 are persecuted in their homelands in, again, far too many places in the world, of a need for us to show a generosity of spirit and an embracement of humankind which, once again I say to you with some great shame, was denied so many Jews in Europe during the period of that Holocaust.

We have some atonement to do. I say that seriously and sincerely. We have some atonement to do, not for what we didn't do; for those who died at the hands of Naziism and their collaborators. The Holocaust Memorial Day can be a day of recall, of remembrance, of celebration of the courage of those people slaughtered by Nazis and Fascists and their collaborators, of the courage of the Jews who rose up and fought back, and a commitment to not only ensuring that it doesn't happen again, but that those who would advocate it understand that an advocacy of that type of hatred will not be tolerated in our community, that it is not acceptable and will be challenged, will be confronted, will be exposed, will be attacked and will be overcome.

There has been recognition of so many organizations, but I want to give some specific appreciation to Hershel Sahian from the Canadian Jewish Congress, who was generous with his time in ensuring that people were aware of this bill this morning and ensuring that all members of this Legislature had material before them that would enable them to understand how important this bill and its goals are.

We, in this century, were witnesses to an effort that, because of the incredible efficiency, the cold, brutal efficiency of the slaughter of Jews and others, was almost a complete annihilation of a people. That is indeed a frightening observation. Surely one is too many; six million is enough to have this burnt and etched into our memories as a community forever.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I'm pleased to rise today and have an opportunity to take part in this debate and to acknowledge Mr Chudleigh, the member for Halton North, who is advancing this bill, and of course to express my support for it and to acknowledge the work that went into this and the importance of this for the people of Ontario. I can't say it much better than Mr Chudleigh or Mr Kormos just did.

When I look at my experience in this place, I'm very proud of the contribution that the Ontario Legislature makes to the lives of people in Ontario and for the recognition a long time ago of the need to remember the unspeakable atrocities of the Holocaust. Some time ago in this Legislature, I guess back in 1991, with the support of the member for Wilson Heights, Mr Kwinter, I began to acknowledge the accomplishments of many of the individuals who survived the Holocaust who live in the province of Ontario. I'm happy to say that we've received support from all parties, very widely, for that initiative to recognize the contribution that survivors of the Holocaust have made to the life we so cherish in Ontario.

We've had the opportunity every year since that time — initially it was done by my sponsorship; it was ultim-

ately taken over by the former government and became a government-sponsored event and it has continued. I'm pleased to say that Premier Harris has been involved in this from the outset. I want to acknowledge the former Israeli consul-general, Dror Zeigerman, who was very instrumental in helping us begin this day of recognition, and now this day is going to be officially recognized upon passage of Mr Chudleigh's bill.

Certainly on each of those occasions on which we have acknowledged the contributions that have been made by people who were survivors of the Holocaust, we as well acknowledged and honoured the families representing the righteous among the nations who attempted, sometimes successfully, to save Jews from the slaughter of places like Auschwitz. We have done that as well, and that's a very important acknowledgement and important part of remembering the Holocaust.

1030

The real importance of this, and Mr Kormos touched on it, is that we're now 53 years past the end of World War II. Even someone who was a small child who may have survived the atrocities of the Holocaust is now part of an aging population. It is important that we do everything we can in this Legislature and in this province to perpetuate the memory of all those who perished in this unspeakable atrocity that occurred.

We have an obligation, and I congratulate every member of this Legislature, particularly Mr Chudleigh, for doing whatever we can to perpetuate the memory because what we are perpetuating is the memory of six million people who died, who perished, who left this earth with no monument and no marker to acknowledge that they ever existed. Thank you for doing it.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'll only be speaking for a couple of moments. But I want to tell the members across the way and particularly the member who introduced this that it is important, that it will get the support of this side of the House, that indeed we should never, ever forget and indeed we should remember with passion the way the Attorney General remembered with passion and with devotion and with dedication to ensuring this will never happen again.

In order to do that, the Attorney General suggested that there should be unique ways to ensure it's always brought to the forefront. The Toronto Jewish Film Society and the Italian Cultural Institute, along with the Bloor Jewish Community Centre and the Bathurst Jewish Centre, will be showing, next Thursday, October 15, at the Leah Posluns Theatre at 4588 Bathurst Street in North York, will be proudly presenting, *The Righteous Enemy*. It is a rarely shown moving documentary about the little-known efforts of Italian soldiers and diplomats to protect 40,000 Jewish refugees during the Holocaust.

This was a very proud time with the Italian and the Jewish cultures, when we came together to protect what we considered to be treasured and precious, and that's life. I encourage and thank Ethel Teitelbaum, who is organizing this with the different groups. I encourage you to come out next Thursday at 7:30 and listen and learn

from the film so that what we know is right and what we know must always be the forefront of anything we do, the protection of life, the assurance that this horror will never, ever happen again.

I commend the member. I also commend those in this House who will speak with passion.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): This morning I also want to give thanks to the member for Halton North, Mr Chudleigh, with the rest of the House, for bringing before us this day an opportunity to reflect, if only for a moment, on a theme that is universal and has some tremendous importance for all of us, to reflect, if only for a moment, on the face of evil as it exists in the world, as it existed in those days when so many people lost their lives needlessly in such an unimaginably terrible way.

Robert Burns in a poem says:

Many and sharp the num'rous ills
Inwoven with our frame!
More pointed still we make ourselves
Regret, remorse, and shame!
And Man, whose heav'n-erected face
The smiles of love adorn, —
Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn!

When you read a poem like that and you listen to a group such as the one I listened to not so long ago in Sault Ste Marie, a group of survivors of the Holocaust at the place of gathering for the Jewish community in that city, and you hear the stories and you see the pain in the faces, you wonder to yourself, how could this happen? How could this have happened then? How can it possibly happen again? How can we not have put in place those checks and balances that would stop that from happening again?

I know in my own life, when I take the time to reflect in the quiet of someplace where I can get in touch with the power of God in my life and I have the courage to look deep inside and for just a moment try to figure out why it is that I respond sometimes in a way that is not in keeping with my wont and I do things that hurt others, I touch ever so shallowly a reservoir of energy there that I have discovered I can use in my life for tremendously wonderful and great and positive achievements in the world. But I can also choose, if I'm not careful, if I'm not thoughtful, if I'm not in touch with my community, those people around me who love me and care for me and support me, to do some very destructive and damaging and evil things. We all have that potential.

When that potential is put together in community, we can do things that in reflection afterwards will make us all wonder how and why and, for goodness' sake, is there anything we can do to stop this from ever happening again?

So it's important that today we take this opportunity, led by Mr Chudleigh, in this place to say once again that we must remember, and in remembering we must say no to that. We must say no to that part of the human reality that might give rise to such an occasion again.

I end with some thoughts from another person who spent some time in jail fighting the forces of evil, Vaclav Havel. He says, "There is only one way to strive for decency, reason, responsibility, sincerity, civility and tolerance, and that is decently, reasonably, responsibly, sincerely, civilly and tolerantly."

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): I am very pleased to rise in support of my colleague's bill, the Holocaust Memorial Day Act. I have always personally believed very strongly that we in this province should officially recognize Holocaust Memorial Day, Yom ha-Shoah, in order to commemorate those who suffered in the Holocaust, but also to provide us with an opportunity to celebrate the survivors of the Holocaust.

I want to recognize the many contributions that the Jewish community has made to Ontario and to our community, and especially to my community in Hamilton. Part of the Jewish community's events in Hamilton is a tribute to an individual or family in our community through the Negev dinner. I'm very pleased to be allowed the honour of sitting on that dinner committee this year and helping in their efforts. The Negev dinner pays tribute not only to an individual or a family who have given of themselves to their community and to the state of Israel, but also allows an opportunity to raise community awareness about the state of Israel and about the needs of that community.

From the agricultural efforts, such as the wonderful, beautiful farmland that currently exists in the Negev desert, to the achievements and support of academic institutions in my community, the Jewish community continues to achieve great things for Ontario and Israel through their hard work and continuing efforts.

1040

This proposed bill affects each and every one of us. Holocaust Yom ha-Shoah represents the bleakest, darkest era in the history of human mankind.

I want to speak particularly about the children. Of the millions who were murdered, 1.5 million were children. These children ranged in age from infants to teenagers; children who came from every walk of life, from different families, different backgrounds, different religions and cultures. Some were rich; some were poor. Out of all the differences they had, they had one thing in common: By the 1930s, with the rise of the Nazis in Germany, they were all potential victims. For them, this ended an era in their lives, and their lives were forever changed.

Many children were forced to live in ghettos. Many of them suffered under horrible conditions. Typically, many families were crowded into a few small rooms, with little or no heat or food and certainly no privacy. Many in the ghettos perished from malnutrition, starvation, exposure and epidemics.

Some children escaped deportation to the ghettos by going into hiding, with or without their families, aided by non-Jewish families, friends and neighbours. Children who did find refuge with others outside the ghettos had to assume different identities, and they had to conform to the local religious customs, which were different from their own, in order to survive.

One case that was somewhat different and that I want to point out was the case of two Polish Jewish children. I bring that to light because I come from a Polish background as well. These two Polish Jewish children were taken in by a Polish family in Krakow and were hidden there for a great deal of time. After many months, the family decided they wanted to adopt these children and have them baptized in their Catholic religion. They approached their priest, who advised them that they should wait in case the family should survive and should turn up to reclaim their children. The family waited, and the priest said he would pray for the family and for the reunification of the family. Eventually the family did survive the ghetto and did come back to join their children. That's a remarkable story. That parish priest went on to become the Archbishop of Krakow and today is Pope John Paul II.

As we debate the passage of this important bill, let us do so with those child victims of the Holocaust in our minds. Let us make this day of Yom ha-Shoah a tribute to them and to the survivors, many of whom live in Ontario. We are all the beneficiaries of their contribution to our society. We must reach out to receive the suffering children of the world today. We must remember the tragedy of those countries that refused to hear the cries of the suffering children of 1933 to 1945. Let us at least begin with Yom ha-Shoah and with the silent prayer that ends with the words "Never again."

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I certainly would like to congratulate the member for Halton North for bringing this forward, because this helps tell the story that six million people could not tell.

I just want to read a poem from Primo Levi, a survivor of Auschwitz.

In the brutal nights we used to dream
Dense violent dreams,
Dream with the soul and body:
To return; to eat; to tell the story.

I think this is what this bill helps to do, to tell the story. As the Attorney General said, we are now 53 years away. Those of us who are old enough perhaps can remember from what we experienced or from what others have told us. The problem is the children who come. What will they know about the story? That's why I think it is obligatory for us as legislators, as teachers and as adults to make sure the story is told of this horrible episode in history. We cannot allow it to be lost, and it will be lost, because we find too little time to teach history and to know history. I had the good fortune of being a history teacher and I had the good fortune of having help back in the late 1970s from Ruth Resnick from the Canadian Jewish Congress, who helped me develop a curriculum for teaching the Holocaust to high school students.

I can remember the only available material at that time was a National Film Board of Canada documentary called *Memorandum*, which talked about a gentleman from Toronto who went back for the first time to the concentration camps and took a group with him.

We have to tell the story to our children, and that is what I hope we will do through our curriculum, through

our educational system, because we cannot let the six million people die totally in vain. That is our obligation, and I think this Bill 66 does this.

We must make the link to reality, because this is not a faraway, oblique thing. We know the story of the SS St Louis, the ship filled with Jewish people who tried to get out of Nazi Germany. They were refused entry in the States, refused entry in Cuba. They were refused entry in Canada. That's the dark side of the story we must also tell to remind everybody that this wasn't an isolated event that occurred in some far-off time in a far-off country. This is a human story of human tragedy beyond proportion and belief, and that is the linkage we must make to our young people.

It can happen again if we don't learn from history to ensure that it does not happen again. I think Mr Chudleigh's bill and the efforts of the Canadian Jewish Congress, B'nai Brith and all these organizations should join with us in ensuring that the story is told over and over again, because we all know of the deniers who are out there. They will not go away, and that's why we have to recognize Yom ha-Shoah and make it important for us, and especially for the children, to not forget.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Mr Speaker, 15,000 children passed through the camp of Terezin from 1941 to 1945. One hundred survived. One who did not was Frantisek Bass, born in 1930 and deported to Terezin in 1942. He was murdered at Auschwitz in 1944. He left a poem, which I'll read:

A little garden
Fragrant and full of roses
The path is narrow and a little boy walks along it
A little boy, a sweet boy
Like that growing blossom.
When the blossom comes to bloom
The little boy will be no more.
Six million little boys and girls and men and women
Six million of our cousins,
Who by the whim of monsters are no more.

I'm privileged to have the opportunity to speak on this important issue, and at the outset want to compliment my colleague the member for Halton North, Mr Chudleigh, on this important initiative.

The symbolic importance of this bill is quite meaningful to everyone in my constituency, but undoubtedly it's of special importance to the significant and vibrant Jewish community, not just in Nepean but indeed throughout Ottawa-Carleton, a people who have contributed so much to our community over the years, many of whom lost a loved one or a family member in the Holocaust. I have constituents who lost a mother, lost a father, an aunt or an uncle.

The most startling nature of the tragedy of the Holocaust in one respect is that an entire generation never got to know their grandparents, who were murdered in undoubtedly the most horrific circumstances imaginable. It is our responsibility to ensure that this never happens again. Never again. The most meaningful tribute we can

pay as a community and as a society is to work against this evil among us.

Tragically, accidents in Cambodia and in the Balkans today, as we sit here and speak, continue. Tragically, a small number continue to try and perpetuate the vicious lies of denial. Tragically, a small number continue to perpetuate hate in our society. We must all speak up against it and work to eliminate it from our society.

Earlier this year I had the privilege of visiting Israel, and the most sobering experience was visiting the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial and museum. It was undoubtedly one of the most shocking and horrific tales that could be told. One of the most meaningful things for me was to see a glass case of 3,000 eyeglasses taken from victims — 3,000 of six million — and to think about each of the owners of those eyeglasses. The museum details a very meaningful and important accounting of the lead-up to the Holocaust that perhaps is even more important than the Holocaust itself, where the state — not a group in the state, but the state itself — led a campaign to inspire hatred and then violence against its own citizens of Jewish descent. I was shocked to learn the small percentage of the German population who were Jewish — very small.

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This bill, albeit small, is nonetheless symbolic in a meaningful way, and it provides an important opportunity for all of us to reflect and educate ourselves and, most important, as the member for Oakwood said, the next generation, about the enduring lessons of the Holocaust, to ensure each and every year that we commit ourselves not just as individuals but collectively as a society to work to ensure that we will not tolerate hatred and that we will not let this happen again. Never again.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to lend my unqualified and enthusiastic support to Mr Chudleigh's bill and to say that I think it will serve an important purpose. Every year I visit with members in the Armenian community on April 24, and they recognize a genocide that took place 83 years ago, when 1.5 million Armenians — men, but a lot of women and children — were killed. The world community essentially was by and large silent on that. Hitler once said, as he began to plan his atrocities, something like, "Who today remembers the Armenian genocide?" In other words, the world community simply ignored a genocide. What we had was a despicable act, six million men and, as we know, many women and children, systematically killed.

It started initially with economic sanctions. The world community to a very large extent — not exclusively, but to a very large extent — was silent. Hitler continued his plan, which then became physical abuse, and then it became genocide and, as I say, to a very large extent the world community was silent. There were heroes there, but overall far too silent.

Today, Mr Chudleigh's bill is to try to make sure that never again are we silent. By the way, I would say that the B'Nai Brith League for Human Rights is probably a model for us. Whenever I see a human rights violation in Ontario, the first group to respond to it is B'Nai Brith

League for Human Rights. Often it's not a popular issue, but there they are. If we want to have a model, watch what they do. There was a group of refugees in Scarborough, actually, who were in motels awaiting hearings on whether they'd be allowed to stay in Canada or not, and some skinheads began to picket them. The B'Nai Brith League for Human Rights responded instantly to that.

That's another purpose of this bill of Mr Chudleigh's: to make sure that all of us together respond and that we have the courage that when we see an abuse of human rights, there is an overwhelming response against it.

I have my own view of Canada. I view it as like a flower garden of people. Initially, there was one flower in this garden. Those are our First Nations. Then, over the history of Canada, we've been fortunate to attract flowers from around the world. I happen to think perhaps some of the best have come from other countries, to provide the most beautiful flower garden in the world. We are a diverse nation of many, many, many cultures, religions and races.

The flower garden has to be fertilized. But like any flower garden, weeds creep in. One of the purposes of this bill is to make sure that when we see a weed of racism, of discrimination, of abuse of human rights, we remember the Holocaust as a tribute to those six million people and that all of us will respond together to weed that weed out of our garden and to make sure that this continues to be the most beautiful flower garden in the world.

I appreciate your bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): You have two minutes to reply.

Mr Chudleigh: I want to thank all of the members of the House but also particularly those members who spoke so eloquently on this subject today.

The times when holocausts have taken place throughout history are indeed a sad chapter in human history. Of all the examples of genocide, none is more important to an individual than the one that affected them the most.

I thank all of you for your very kind remarks today in the House.

CHILD CARE

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I move that it be resolved that the government of Ontario urge the federal government of Canada to provide a fair tax and benefit option for child care programs that provide parents with the opportunity to care for their children in the manner of their choosing, and that creates a "level playing field" where parents receive equal benefits regardless of the method of child care chosen, including direct parental care.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 95(c)(i), the honourable member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Tilson: Over the years, the definition of "family" has gone through drastic changes. The nuclear family of the 1950s is no longer considered the norm. In order to meet the challenges of today's economic and social

realities, families have had to adapt. It is safe to say that there really is no "normal" family. Today we have single parents working or furthering their education; we have double-income parents; we have single-income parents where one parent stays home to raise the children; and the list goes on. All of these types of families should be honoured and respected for the choices they have made.

With this diversity in today's working families, it is clear that one form of child care is not enough. These families cannot fit into one mould. The Ontario government is responding to this challenge. Earlier this year the Honourable Ernie Eves, the Minister of Finance, announced a budget that would hold great significance for families all across Ontario. A minimum 30% tax cut rate was announced, an improved and expanded child care supplement for working families was announced and, finally, a workplace child care tax incentive was announced.

The 30% tax cut rate will relieve all families regardless of the choices of daycare they have made. The child care supplement for working families will also provide savings and choices. This supplement is available to assist all low- and middle-income families regardless of whether they have double incomes or a parent attending school or whether one parent stays at home to care for their young children. This government is responding to the needs of today's working families.

A two-earner family with two children having an income of \$37,000 will save up to \$2,810 with the tax cut and child care supplement; a single parent with two children and an income of \$32,500 will save up to \$3,855; and finally, a one-earner family with two children earning \$34,500 will save up to \$3,115.

Why are these figures that I have just read important? They show that our government is providing the necessary assistance to meet the needs of today's working families without bias. With the workplace child care tax incentive, child care at one's own place of business has even been made more accessible to families. These kinds of incentives provide today's families with a number of options when it comes to how they choose to raise their children, and it is clear that this government also recognizes that at-home child care is an honourable profession worthy of recognition.

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The current federal tax structure, on the other hand, is biased and unfair. The federal government does not recognize at-home child care to be honourable, and they have arranged their tax and benefit options accordingly. The federal child care expense deduction, for example, can provide \$3,000 per child between seven and 16 and \$5,000 per child under seven. However, one-earner families are not eligible for this deduction and it is assumed that stay-at-home parents incur no child care expenses.

Activities such as hockey camp, drama or music camps, play schools and nursery schools may also be claimed by double-income families. Double-income families can also claim wages to a child care worker while a parent is on maternity leave, this being necessary to ensure that the

worker will still be available once the parent returns to work.

In fact, this federal deduction is even designed to have an inverse relationship to need. Unlike the Ontario provincial supplement designed to assist low- and middle-income families, child care expense deduction benefits increase as the family income increases. For instance, a reduction of \$5,000 of taxable income to a family in a 17% tax bracket would mean a savings of \$850; however, this same reduction to a family in a 50% tax bracket would mean a savings of \$2,500. Once again, I remind you all that this deduction is available only to those who choose child care out of one's own home.

While subsidized child care is extremely important for those families who need or want it, it cannot be the only option. Child care expense deduction provides an obvious incentive to seek child care outside the home. For families who need the assistance of this deduction, the federal government is essentially making the child care choices for them.

While I'd argue that the tax programs designed to allow both parents the option of entering the workforce are necessary, I would also argue that the system that forces parents into this arrangement is wrong. Obviously the child care expense deduction is not provided to cover food and clothing expenses for children. It is meant to cover the expense of going to work and seeking child care services for your family. However, it should not be assumed that a parent who chooses to stay at home to look after the children does not incur child care expenses. Hopefully we will all agree that forgoing an entire income in order to look after your children is a great expense.

There are those who would argue, on the other hand, that if a parent chooses to stay at home it is because the family is economically sound enough to do so. However, this is another assumption that should not be made. According to Statistics Canada, one-income families earn less money than dual-income households, a gap that has been widening over the years. The same source also states that dual-income families also spend more on restaurant meals, appliances and family vacations.

One must also consider the families who aren't necessarily choosing to have one parent stay at home. There are some low-income families who are unable to afford child care outside their home. That's why the Ontario government still provides the child care supplement to families even when the care is occurring in the home. However, I remind all members that the same is not true with the federal government. Then again I also remind you that the federal government's child care expense deduction isn't really designed to help low-income families.

What can the province do? What can we do to put an end to this inequitable taxation system? I am certainly not the only person to debate this issue of tax inequity. It has been going on all over the place. In fact, the need to recognize the role of a parent in the home as a valid child care provider within the taxation and pension systems is currently a highly debated issue.

The federal Liberal caucus committee on social policy has tax treatment under consideration regarding the issue. Policy matters relating to stay-at-home parents have recently been put under review. Several members of Parliament from a variety of parties have spoken on this and other related issues in the federal House of Commons. Why then is there a need for our government to take a stand on this important social issue? Because the changes have yet to be made. A reporting time frame for the federal Liberal caucus committee has yet even to be established. Clearly now is the time to show our support for these much-needed changes.

The people of Ontario have the right to choose how they wish to raise their children. They have the right to decide what arrangements will best suit the needs of their own families. It's therefore wrong for federal child care benefits to so unfairly direct parents to make the choices they may otherwise not have made. Until these changes have been made, the federal government is making the important decisions for families. Evidently from the federal government's point of view, Canadians do not have the right to make these choices.

So what can be done? Obviously making the child care expense deduction available to all families with children is a step in the right direction. However, it does not address all the issues. In fact, it's designed to provide greater savings for those families with lesser needs; it does not address the needs of the lesser-income parents, and that issue needs to be looked at as well.

What remains the important issue is that the lower- and middle-income families need to look after their children and they need to be able to decide for themselves how they want to do that. We cannot allow the federal government to interfere with how these choices are made. It's time for us to lend our support to all those parents demanding choice and equality.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I'm happy to speak to this motion today and I think I should say at the outset that I believe the member who is advancing this motion does have a sincere need to see that day-care opportunities are there for parents who need them. I think he is on record for some time now as being a personal advocate for children and I believe he is being sincere.

Having said that, I must go on that regardless of his own personal intent with this motion today, the government's record is all too clear in the area of child care, like daycare, here in Ontario. Over the last three years we have seen extraordinary difficulties being faced by Ontario families. We have to put this in the context of the policy the government has advanced over the last three years, what we know is happening just in large urban settings like Toronto, and that is that the daycare spaces that exist in Toronto today are fewer and the lineups longer than they have ever been. When we see individual MPPs standing up for children and for daycare and for care for children, we would only ask that the caucus that advances that be consistent in that regard.

As an example, today we are having debates daily about the changes in education. Because of the government advancing the new school funding formula, this has had a direct impact, not just on children in education but indeed in daycare. Where we have families who have had consistent and stable daycare opportunities for the children in schools, what we're seeing now with the new funding formula is that school boards are making choices to charge rent to the daycare centres that exist in their local schools.

When parents choose daycare, their first option always is, "I wish I could stay home myself with the children." Having said that, if they cannot be home with the children, they are choosing, if they can, well-regulated, high-quality daycare. What we know is that's what parents want. What we know is that since this government took office it has been more and more difficult for parents to have that opportunity.

What's quite interesting in the debate about child care is that this is the government that advanced, through various papers that were eventually leaked to the public, the consideration of vouchers for child care. Our greatest concern over the last three years has been the consideration that you may be weakening the daycare act so that you would be weakening the regulations that surround child care centres.

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We had great concern with that and the Ontario public should have great concern with anything that will advocate spending Ontario taxpayers' money in anything other than highly regulated child care centres. We say that because that is what parents know. We have had example after example in our province where parents have taken their children to daycare centres with the full knowledge that their children will be cared for as they would care for them at home. What we don't want to hear is that a government would try to move away from that kind of system and take Ontario taxpayers' money with them outside of a regulated field.

There's a good reason that governments historically have even moved into homes that are opened up as daycare centres, so that if you're caring for children over a certain number, you too are subject to the same kind of regulation that a daycare centre would be. That's because parents have to have some kind of a sense that regulation is what they're looking for. They know that it's against the law to have an infraction against the regulation. They can feel comfort in knowing their children are being cared for well.

That has been the history with this current government. You've not made moves to strengthen the act where it could be strengthened. In fact, you have advanced positions that would potentially weaken the act and that concerns us. Where you have had the opportunity, more so than the federal government — because we can all argue that the federal government is the furthest away from people and the Ontario government is closer and has traditionally looked at providing actual spaces, not just tax credits. The advantage of actually having the space

provided is that the children have somewhere to go, into a space, versus a tax credit. We would argue that a tax credit puts a family in a position to have to pay the money out in order to receive the benefit of a tax credit. Often it's these same poor working families that don't have the money up front to pay those kinds of fees in order to take benefit of the tax credit.

In the whole discussion of daycare, which can't be as simplified as coming today, this morning, to speak to this particular resolution, we have to look at it in a much broader scope than that. Yes, if parents had a choice, if financially they could stay home, that's their first preference. Second, if they're not looking after their own children, they want to see their children in centres that are highly regulated and of the highest quality. We believe that if we're going to spend Ontario taxpayers' money in the area of daycare, it must be within the guidelines of the daycare act that is going to make it a very highly regulated, safest place to keep our most precious cargo.

That is what we've said all along. Instead, we've had to go out there, around the road show, all across Ontario, talking with daycare workers who are worried about job loss. Go to schools that are facing eliminating the daycare centre that exists in their own school.

We cannot hear today and this morning in this House that in fact you've done more for children in the area of daycare than any other government. I wouldn't even suggest that the last term of government and certainly the term before that had a special focus on improving the opportunities. We know there are people who are currently on welfare who would be out in the job market if only they knew they had daycare space. In fact, if daycare were made available to them, you would have a significant decline in welfare rolls.

That's where we expect the direction of the government to go, to move people from the system because they know that it's the daycare opportunities that are lacking in order to have them get out there and into the workforce. That's the kind of thing we expect in terms of consistency if we're going to talk about daycare out of this government. We can't suddenly come in and advance the idea that you have to urge the feds to do something.

Every time the feds do something, you end up clawing it back. That's been your history. You've done that most recently again with a clawback. You've done that again in training programs, where every other province in Canada has managed to make a deal with the federal government except Ontario. The last thing we can see you doing, and it's been your history, is to try to work together to come to some good conclusion that would benefit families in Ontario. Every other province in Canada manages to come to that conclusion but Ontario.

We're seeing that again today in the discussion of daycare. If you were sincere about improving the lot of daycare opportunities for families, you wouldn't be throwing daycare centres out of schools across Ontario because of your new school funding formula. I'd like to ask the members of this House who are here and who may speak to this bill what intervention they have made to their

Minister of Education to say that the school funding formula should not be forcing school boards to go out there and charge non-profit daycare centres that operate in schools — because you know they can't afford it now, as is the case in the minister's own backyard. They're facing rental fees that they simply cannot afford, and if that should continue they'll simply close and go away. The 60 or 70 children who are there in the daycare centre will be out there. Those are kids of working parents.

We can't on the one hand stand up for families who need daycare and who need every opportunity for child care, and on the other hand your own government, through various ministries, is taking those opportunities away from parents who are already out there. You have to be consistent. Individually, every one of us wants to see us do right by the children of Ontario. I would ask very sincerely that if you're genuinely interested in making the lot of our children better, then you will be consistent in your government policy, that you won't play this as a political game and use it as another opportunity to blame some other level of government but look instead at your own ministries, your own history and track record in the area of child care.

Every child care advocate out there today will tell you that your record has not been wonderful and that you need to be improving this. You want to make improvements for the economy of Ontario, and the one surefire way to do that is to focus on daycare opportunities.

I'll stop there. I have other colleagues who will speak to this. I look forward to the resolution coming to a vote.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I appreciate the opportunity to address Mr Tilson's resolution. I appreciate the comments by Ms Pupatello and I'm largely in agreement with her.

I'm torn about the final part of the resolution. I have to say to the member that I understand the intent of what he is proposing. An opportunity to provide equitable access to the benefit of good-quality child rearing and child education, however that may be found by a family, is a sentiment with which I agree, but I have to say that I find the resolution, in the very narrow approach it takes, looking only at the federal tax treatment, to be a solution that doesn't match the complexity of the issue.

I understand that of course in a simple resolution that we debate in private members' time, it is difficult to cure all the ills of the world, including all the ills of the current child care dilemma faced by many families. I'm appreciative of that and appreciative of the attempt of the member, but I believe that setting out in this direction takes the debate in the wrong direction, and for that reason I am not in complete agreement with the resolution he has set out.

I believe there are solutions we can find that would make accessible to all families the choice of good-quality child care options and early childhood education options. I think one of those is a clarion call that for years I was part of demanding of government: the move towards a completely universal, accessible, quality child care system. Over the years, I think the call for that has become more

sophisticated in understanding the important role not simply of child care as an option for parents who must work and who require that support for good quality care for their children while they're at work, but in understanding the basic importance of early childhood education and looking at the body of research that has been developed that speaks to the incredible outcomes, particularly for children in vulnerable family situations, that come from the opportunity of early childhood education.

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One of the things that I believe was an important step of the last government, which unfortunately has been abandoned as a direction, was the pilot projects on the early years project. The early years learning project, a recommendation that came out of the Royal Commission on Learning, was a model different than the current child care model that we have in the province. It was a model designed to provide opportunity, not compel attendance, for children younger than the junior kindergarten age for an experience of early childhood education. This is the three-year-old project that had been talked about. While there was a concern among some when the concept was first brought forward that it might mean that we would compel all children to attend — well, we don't compel children to attend junior kindergarten; it's an option that would be open — I think moving in that universal way would be an important contribution.

At the other end, at the much younger end, is understanding the important role of parental leave for those who are in the workplace and looking at what is happening. One place where I might join in with the member in being critical of the current state of affairs at the federal level is with respect to what's happening under employment insurance and the kind of restrictions on eligibility that have been put in place, particularly as they apply to young or new mothers — mothers in the workforce with new children, no matter whether they are young or it's their first child or not.

If you look at the experience of the use of maternity leave benefits and UI supplements, their latest statistics show that there has been a dramatic decrease, something in the order of an over 7% decrease in the use of those benefits, and not because there has been a corresponding decrease in the birth rate — I think there's less than a 2% decrease in the birth rate over the last couple of years, the corresponding period — but because of two things: first, the change in employment patterns in very difficult times when more women are finding themselves in part-time work as opposed to full-time employment, even though full-time employment might be their first option; and second, because of the restrictions on eligibility for UI, they are simply not eligible. That supplement program that had been put in place to support parenting and parental leaves in the very early days of a child has become less useful to the vast majority of Canadian parents, men and women, but primarily women on maternity leave who had used the majority of that benefit in the past.

The call for a more universal approach to understanding the need for child care must also, however, go hand in hand with a recognition of the importance of quality child care and regulated child care. One of the concerns I have about the direction of the current government in Ontario, and I see it reinforced time and time again, whether it is in the Ecker report when the now minister was a parliamentary assistant and studied the child care system and produced a report with recommendations or whether it is in her current moves with respect to the funding of child care and the review of that funding that she is undertaking for those recipients of social welfare or those participants in Ontario Works. The direction seems to me to be clear, and it is a concern that I have with the proposal before us today.

I may be wrong about your own feelings on this, Mr Tilson, but the direction from the government that I see is one which, in using the language of supporting parental choice, seems to be looking for a much cheaper option and approach which provides a lump of money to parents to purchase that service out there, and a lump of money which is so inadequate that for many low-income working families or others, the option becomes one of unregulated care. You can find some good caregivers in unregulated care — I don't paint the broad brush for them all — but I do have to tell you, in terms of the research that has been done and the anecdotal horror stories that we have amassed over the years, any parent who had the option of being able to afford good-quality, regulated child care, if they required that kind of support, would choose and in fact is choosing that option.

There are currently in Toronto alone 21,000 families who are affected by forced participation in Ontario Works, who are on a waiting list for quality, regulated child care spaces. That's in addition to the 15,000 who are already on the list. There is a crisis there, and I have to say to the member that the approach that she lauds so highly on behalf of the government, the approach of the income supplement, does nothing to address the issue of the shortage of quality, regulated child care spaces. In fact, it does very little for those working families which she, rightly, would like to assist. It is in the amount of about \$85 a month per child. That comes close to buying maybe a half a week of quality child care.

The options that you're providing for parents are not a true choice. While I will say that I prefer the income supplement approach to the previous approach of a year ago — which you were going to spend the same money on, by the way — which was the tax credit approach, neither of them measure up to an approach which would be a commitment to expanding the amount of quality, regulated child care spaces and subsidized spaces that are available in our province.

I do have to say that it's with some irony that I respond to the claims members of the government made about how much they have done for parents and for the child care system in this province, particularly the minister who spoke about this yesterday. I have to roll my eyes. Three years ago in 1996 in the budget the finance minister got up

and made an announcement that, "Over the next five years we're going to be spending \$40 million more a year cumulatively to the total of \$200 million more a year, the most any government has ever spent in the history of the province on child care." Those words are right in the budget document.

Applause.

Ms Lankin: No, Mr Klees, you shouldn't clap. You have to wait for the rest of the story. Not a penny of it was spent that year.

The next year in 1997 he announced the \$40 million again, but this time it was going to be a tax credit for child care. Then in 1998, and the member referred to this, he announced the same \$40 million again, but not one penny has yet been spent. Three years later, the same money again and now it's an income supplement, and an income supplement that is not going to purchase good-quality child care and help those families meet those needs. Enough said on that. I'm sorry. What's that great movie with that great line? "Show me the money." Enough with the announcements; it would be nice to see some action.

But the crisis that we are seeing emerge in terms of waiting lists for good-quality child care should be instructive at least in one way to the government which does herald parental choice — and I understand that and I am supportive of the view of the importance of parental choice. They should, then, understand the vast majority of parents who are opting to choose good-quality child care and who can't afford it and who require subsidy help for that. That should be like the polls that you listen to with respect to other policies that you're developing in the direction of the government. That's a real-life poll; that's not some hypothetical question over the phone. That's an action parents have taken to enlist and to hope and pray that someday that subsidy may become available to them.

Let me now tie back into your calls for a change in the federal government's approach. I would prefer an approach of government at all levels which sees a number of aspects to it, which sees support for an increased number of quality, regulated child care spaces in our country, support which sees a greater number of those spaces being cost-shared for subsidy. I will admit that the federal government under, first of all, Prime Minister Mulroney and then Chrétien has essentially decimated the cost-sharing from the federal level of government for subsidized child care. There is no doubt about that, and there should be round criticism of that.

But those two aspects, along with an expansion of the view of universality of accessibility, let me put it that way, to early childhood education opportunities and an expansion in the parental leave provisions and making them meaningful and, again, accessible to people not in the way in which we've seen them being done through the employment insurance system with all the restrictions that have been put in place which have made it less accessible to Canadians, the array of options there seems to me to provide more of an opportunity for real choice.

The last comment I want to touch is in response to the member's plea for the federal government to understand

the important role of parenting and parental choice, stay-at-home parenting, in some way in the tax system and the pension system. I thought that was very interesting. I remember for a number of years the call for pensions for homemakers. It was something generally that members of the Conservative Party were not in favour of, so I'm interested to hear you moving into that direction and talking about pensions and how pensions treat difference in terms of working individuals and stay-at-home individuals. It's not just parenting. It's in terms of recognizing what happens within the home and its importance to the economy and the sustaining of our economy and understanding that stay-at-home parenting and stay-at-home homemaking is a vital role in allowing families and individuals to participate in the economic workforce.

1130

I'd be interested in your thoughts about whether it is only parenting that you see as having a value for this kind of tax credit and/or pension treatment or whether the issue of homemaking comes into that. There have been many debates over the years as to whether or not that is a worthy cause, those debates similar to what you said where people simply say you then would be subsidizing the wealthiest who can afford to stay home. As you point out, that is not always the case; sometimes it is and maybe there's a way of addressing that. We're very good at making tax systems complex, so maybe there is a way of addressing that.

I find myself conflicted. I think that the direction and the specific issue you bring forward, while I understand the intent and I'm actually very sympathetic to the intent of what you bring forward, doesn't match the complexity of the issue. To move on that one piece takes us down a road that I think is counterproductive to the overall goal of where we need to be.

I find myself in opposition to the specific recommendation in your resolution but torn and quite sympathetic to the sentiment which gave rise to it.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I'm pleased to rise in support of Mr Tilson's ballot item number 24.

Just as a small preamble, I should always remind people that as a parent with five children, and my wife is a teacher, a professional, we've had to make many choices with child-rearing responsibilities. That's why I chose to speak on this. It is a shared responsibility, it is not a gender issue and the world of work itself is changing. There is a whole argument aside from that.

Many constituents in my riding of Durham East are homeworkers — consultants, professional people in business and financial areas — who are contending with home care issues. I think that as you look to the next century, you have to look for choice. Clearly, my support here is that the governments, both provincially and federally, have to look at a series of options, of which one of course would include the motion by Mr Tilson today.

Our government clearly recognizes the important role of children and the important aspect of paying some additional attention to that. In that respect, the Honourable Margaret Marland, the first minister for children in this

province, has outlined a number of initiatives on the part of this government: For the sake of those listening today, the child care supplement, \$40 million, is an important addition, \$100 million for the national child care benefit; next year this will grow to \$200 million. This year the program will be delivered to 210,000 families and support some 350,000 young people in Ontario.

We're also working with business and providing for the workplace that is changing. As we know, many agreements with the union representation — in fact, there are areas here at Queen's Park where there are child care places right in the place of work. We're providing a 30% child care tax credit in capital costs for those businesses, making those investments for their employees. I would encourage that. Also, for people with young children who are trying to reskill themselves and return to work, because the two-income family situation is the reality today, we're providing a supplement of over \$1,000 per year when the parents have children under the age of seven.

The member for Beaches-Woodbine suggested that perhaps there was some decline in the provision of regulated child spaces. The reality, in my research: In 1984-85 the then Liberal government spent some \$87.3 million in this area. Today we're spending some \$600 million, so clearly the money is there, more than in any other province on a per capita basis. The licensed child care system has also grown. Currently, there are 143,000 regulated child care spaces. That's an increase of some 14,000 spaces since March 1995. I think it's entirely good news.

On a more personal note, why did I take the time to come this morning? Not because I'm a parent of five children but because from way back this issue has been of some value to me. I was struck this morning by the member for Windsor-Sandwich's comments. The member for Beaches-Woodbine probably covered that better than I did. The member for Windsor-Sandwich accused the provincial government of clawbacks. We were all part of the debate earlier this week with respect to the EI fund and their clawback in that area. I would remind members of the federal Liberal government's clawback of some \$6 billion out of the health care system for Canadians.

I also remind them to look at their income tax statement, the weekly or monthly stub on their cheque, and see the increases over time in the CPP — that pension contribution is increasing double for the employers as well — and more specifically the income tax itself. I have a statement here that the income tax system is clearly stacked against the single-income family. In fact, I'd like to read for the record a paper in my research. This is from Mr Louis Lévesque, director of the personal income tax division in the federal government, the Department of Finance. This was issued in February 1997. I'll read a couple of things.

I'm just going to deviate here for a moment. I supported a federal Liberal private member's bill in Ottawa to address this very issue of Mr Tilson's. My first correspondence was very early in 1996, when I wrote to then-

member Paul Szabo. I believe he was the MP for Mississauga South. Mr Szabo was dealing with the same issue, a child tax credit. I supported him and wrote to a number of people in my riding to make them aware that there are Liberals who really do care about making the playing field level.

Going back to the comments made by Mr Lévesque in the report he submitted to the ministry, he says:

"Nevertheless, under the current income tax system, the combined tax liability of one-earner couples (defined in this paper as those in which one spouse has income not exceeding \$6,456) is generally higher than that of two-earner couples with the same income and family structure.

"A one-earner couple with two children and \$60,000 income can pay as much as \$7,000 more in total federal and provincial income taxes" — about \$15,000 more per family that's disadvantaged. That would go a long way. I'm going to quote this for the member for Beaches-Woodbine, who's looking at that. I'm going to refer to this chart from the federal government and make one more reference. A one-earner family with an income of \$60,000 would pay \$15,600 in tax and a two-earner family would only pay \$8,600.

Clearly, the initiative by Mr Tilson would indeed help those single-income families to have a level playing field.

I'm sharing my time with other members.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to join the debate on the resolution. I expect that all of us are supportive of measures that will bring our society up to date. In the workplace most are now two-income families. My wife and I have four grown children who are facing the challenges of combining work and being parents as well. It is not an easy job. My children happen to live in the Metropolitan Toronto area, and with distances and time travelled it is extremely challenging. I'm very supportive of things that will help to bring up to date measures that make it easier to combine work and family. I'm supportive of the thrust of the resolution, which I guess is designed to be one step forward.

1140

My only challenge is that I normally like to know what the cost of something is, and I have no idea whether we're talking here about \$100 million or \$1 billion or \$5 billion. I simply don't know. One of the luxuries of private members' time is that you can support in principle a thrust, always with the proviso that when it's finally costed out it may be an idea that is directionally sound but unaffordable. I think everybody in Ontario understands the need to be fiscally responsible.

I'm pleased to be supportive of things that bring our workplaces up to date. I think there's much more we have to do to change our laws and regulations around making it easier for families to combine work and parenthood. As I say, I'm supportive of the thrust of it. Normally I'd like to see a lot more about the cost of it. Frankly, the resolution is quite open-ended on that, and it talks about "regardless of the method of child care chosen, including direct parental care," so I suspect the intent is some tax break for

parents who stay home. As I say, I'm supportive of the thrust and concerned about the details.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I'm pleased to participate in this debate on this important resolution brought forward by our colleague. I'll try to focus my remarks specifically to this resolution. Much has been said about what is being done already in this province. It's particularly important to note that we are discussing this issue on this day, which falls into Family Week, and I think the underlying focus here is on the importance of the family and the role governments play, either directly or indirectly, in supporting that most important institution in our society.

Back in September 1997, I presented a petition to this Legislature that was brought to me by one of my constituents, a Ms Cheryl Stewart of Bolton. On that occasion I read into the record this petition:

"That managing the family home and caring for infants and preschool children is an honourable profession which has not been recognized for its value to our society and deserves respect and support;

"That child care policies and funding should provide equity and fairness to all Ontario families."

The petition went on to say that we would encourage discussion with the federal government to encourage the federal government to make some adjustments to its tax policies to recognize the importance of families who make the choice to have one parent stay at home and look after the child.

I will be the first one to say that I wish we could do more as a provincial government in that direction as well, and I will join with other colleagues in this House to advocate that much more be done in this area on the part of our government. But I will say this — and I won't repeat what has been said by other members in this House — that this government already has done much more than many other governments that have gone before.

I would like to speak very briefly to the fact that I believe we do need to appeal to the federal government, which is the thrust of this resolution, to make some changes not only to how they deal with child support but also to the underlying tax system that's in place. We know that somehow the taxation system in this country really is undermining much of what parents would like to do in support of their children. For example, if you have a single earner in a family earning \$60,000 and you compare the taxes that are paid by that single earner to a family that earns \$60,000 between two parents, there's a difference of about \$5,600 that's paid in income taxes.

I think what we need to do as a society is really focus on how we can have our taxation system not undermine the family but in fact support the family and make it possible for those choices to be made by parents to elect that one of those parents stay home.

The member for Beaches-Woodbine made reference to the affordability of this. I question in the long term whether we can afford to continue not to support this kind of program, because encouraging a system where we perhaps reward parents for placing their children into

organized, structured daycare out of the home and encourage them effectively to go to work rather than making it possible for them financially to stay home. I think has its true cost in the long term.

I commend my colleague for bringing this matter forward. I trust the message will be loud and clear to our colleagues at the federal level of government, as they consider this important issue, to make the appropriate changes, and that together, provincially as well as federally, we set this matter right.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The first comment I would make is a general comment on the use of this period. The government members seem to use it to point at other levels of government, particularly the federal government. I've always believed, even when I was in opposition and when the Mulroney government was in power in Ottawa, that the best thing to do is to deal with provincial issues within this purview.

I happen to get along very well with the member who has proposed this. I like some of his thoughts. For instance, I hoped he would have brought forward a resolution on something he and I agree on, that is, the Niagara Escarpment Commission and the need to preserve the Niagara Escarpment lands, because he's been very consistent on that issue and we happen to share our view on that. I would have been here enthusiastically endorsing that and the work that Norm Sterling, when he was Provincial Secretary for Resources Development, did in the early days of establishing the Niagara Escarpment Commission. But we're not talking about that today, so I'll deal with the issue.

I find it interesting — this member isn't a Reform-atory, but many of his colleagues who are quite right-wing are — that he would offer a resolution where the cost is somewhat uncertain. It's just unusual for this particular government to do that and it's something no doubt he would want to look at along the way anyway.

This can be a bit difficult to administer, I think he would agree, in that, how do you determine who should get that tax break or not? There have to be rules. I think it's administration more than anything else that we'd have to look at there.

I think what we need is the best possible daycare out there for people as well. Where the provincial government can play a role is to fund, for those who choose the option of daycare, where you have people who are qualified in the field to deal with children in many ways — that that's available. Dr Fraser Mustard has emphasized in many of his speeches the importance of early childhood education and early contact with children to ensure that later on they don't encounter some of the difficulties that they can.

I appreciate the fact that the member is dealing with an issue that I think is of considerable importance to everyone, the care of children, particularly at that very young age. I think we'll have to look at the details of it. I just wish it would have been in a provincial initiative.

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I'm pleased to stand in support of the resolution of the member for Dufferin-Peel, who as chair of our caucus I've come to

respect a great deal. You can see some of his work through his resolution today, an important and long-standing issue, not one that's spurred by some recent headlines that gets some quick press but one of those issues that families and parents and their children talk about across the dinner table, something that has been there for a long time. I think he's right to press it, to bring about the necessary change, a change to the bias in tax policy against those families where one parent chooses to stay at home, and through this resolution calling on the authors of Canada's tax policy, the federal government, to enact those changes to limit or, if possible, to eliminate that bias. I support him in that.

It's not always politically correct to push for parents to stay at home to raise their children, as the member to my right from York-Mackenzie rightly said. He made a good point that it's very tempting to support the idea that the professional child care lobby, armed with the latest manuals, the latest ideas out of the universities, are the only ones who are capable of adequately raising a child in today's society. I think on this side of the House we would argue quite the opposite, that there's something more meaningful than the latest manual and that is several millennia of wisdom passed down from one family to the next on how best to raise a child. I think it's a dangerous principle to assume or to purport that children are better off in professional daycare as opposed to being raised by the mother or the father in the home.

1150

In my own family, my mother took time off to help raise me, and that's a considerable sacrifice, the opportunity cost in the family, giving up the salary and the impact on her pension in retirement — but something I will be eternally grateful for — to help me prepare for school down the road through her assistance and reading to me and all of these things. Her own mother, not a professional child care worker, helped her raise her own first child.

I think it's right to try to change the tax incentives to eliminate that bias, to give families a free choice of their child care options. When you tax something, Economics 101 will tell you that you will get less of it. If you tax income at higher and higher levels progressively, then there's a disincentive to work harder and to get into those higher tax brackets. If you tax payroll, it's a tax on jobs and as a result you have fewer jobs created. So when you have a tax penalty for stay-at-home parents, inevitably on the margin you're going to have less of it.

I think the resolution is an important one, a long-standing issue, and from Niagara South I give full support to the member for Dufferin-Peel, who wants to see a level playing field to give people the choice of how best to choose child care options for their own children.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Tilson, you have two minutes.

Mr Tilson: I'd like to thank all members of the House for participating in this debate, particularly the members of the opposition who have commented on some of the aspects of this issue, the member for Windsor-Sandwich,

the member for Beaches-Woodbine, the member for St Catharines and the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, in particular. I get the impression that they support the intent but they're opposed generally to the resolution. We'll see.

I understand their saying we've got to broaden the issue, we've got to look at all issues of daycare. Quite frankly, the intent of the resolution is to zero in on that type of tax benefit that's part of our overall daycare, whether it's federal or provincial. If you're going to provide tax benefits to some, for those people who work, the intent of the resolution is that you provide the tax benefits to all.

To my friend who has just spoken, obviously the issue is to put all of these people on a level playing field. That's their job, to criticize. I respect both the two critics who spoke. They do a good job in trying to keep us on our toes. But I don't agree that we should broaden this issue. We should look at this one issue and ask the Ontario government officials to speak to their federal counterparts with respect to changing this law. The federal Liberals are looking at this. It's currently in one of their caucus committees, and we're simply trying to light a fire to keep them going. I don't know where they're going to go on it, but I hope they do something about it.

I'd like to thank a couple of people from my riding who are here today: Cheryl Stewart, Ashley Stewart and Anne Oldham. Cheryl Stewart has been trying to get me to speak on this for four years. Maybe it's because I just had a child three months ago. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: The time for private members' business has expired.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LE JOUR COMMÉMORATIF DE L'HOLOCAUSTE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will deal first with ballot item number 23, standing in the name of Mr Chudleigh.

Mr Chudleigh has moved second reading of Bill 66. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 95(j), the bill is referred to committee of the whole.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): I ask that it be referred to the standing committee on social development.

The Acting Speaker: Everybody agrees? Agreed.

Therefore, a majority of the House being in agreement with the request of the member, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on social development.

CHILD CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will now deal with ballot item number 24, standing in the name of Mr Tilson.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.
Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.
The division bells rang from 1156 to 1201.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Grimmett, Bill	Newman, Dan
Baird, John R.	Guzzo, Garry J.	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bartolucci, Rick	Hastings, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Hudak, Tim	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Caplan, David	Johns, Helen	Ross, Lillian
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Jordan, W. Leo	Sampson, Rob
Curling, Alvin	Klees, Frank	Sergio, Mario
Danford, Harry	Kwinter, Monte	Shea, Derwyn
Duncan, Dwight	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sheehan, Frank
Elliott, Brenda	Leadston, Gary L.	Tilson, David
Ford, Douglas B.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Fox, Gary	Maves, Bart	Wood, Bob
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Young, Terence H.
Gerretsen, John	Murdoch, Bill	
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Boyd, Marion	Lankin, Frances
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Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 49; the nays are 3.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

All matters relating to private members' business having been completed, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1204 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): The government killed my school bus safety bill last year. Though it had the unanimous consent of the Legislature, they would not allow it to be carried over to the current legislative session, but I have reintroduced it.

I have in my hand several recent articles urging drivers to stop for school buses with their red lights flashing. The Chatham Daily News states, "The reminder comes after police received numerous complaints that motorists weren't stopping for school buses." This, in the midst of the back-to-school blitzes conducted by most police departments.

The same thing happened last year. Elgin county OPP had to issue a warning to say: "The consequences for failing to stop for the bus when it has its lights activated can be disastrous. A child could be severely injured or killed because you were either not paying attention or in such a hurry that you thought you could beat the bus lights."

The Harris government refuses to give the law teeth. It refuses to give the law a mechanism to convict drivers who pass school buses illegally. Raising fines isn't enough to protect children. The government law is a failure. There is no deterrent. Police shouldn't have to beg drivers to heed the law.

Premier, your job is to protect innocent children, not guilty drivers. Lives are at stake. Pass vehicle liability to protect our children.

NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE FORCE

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): The ministry inspection of the Niagara Regional Police Force released yesterday reveals some very startling findings. In fact, it confirms what the Niagara Regional Police and their association have been trying to tell the province, this government, and the people of Niagara for some time now. The Niagara Regional Police are shy 77 officers. That's 13% of their staff complement as it was in 1991.

The ministry inspection report indicates a number of complaints, the most common being the shortage of available deployable officers, resulting in reduced response times and compromising the health and safety of members. In fact, among the conclusions by this inspection team was that there was a shortage of personnel in various operational areas as a result of redirection of staff to front-line patrol to address staff shortages there. It indeed finds that there has been a delay in at least one major criminal investigation.

The head of the Niagara Regional Police association, its administrator, Mike Pratt, on behalf of police officers in Niagara has called upon the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services to conduct their own inquiry, as they're empowered to do under the Police Services Act. The administrator speaks of the concern about the safety of the community, about indeed the safety of police officers and their effectiveness if they continue to be under-resourced as they have been as a result of this government's downloading on to the province.

I call upon the Solicitor General to support that request for an inquiry.

BREAST CANCER

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): On Friday, October 2, 1998, the community of Chatham-Kent was the scene of the first candlelight run-walk to beat breast cancer. Five volunteers — Peggy Seaman, Penny McGregor, Caroline Evans, Karen De Koning and Janette Carroll — worked with Mary Anne McCrae and other staff of the local branch of the Canadian Cancer Society to initiate, design and plan this fund-raiser to raise money to assist in research into the causes of breast cancer, and hopefully someday a cure.

What was most inspiring about the event were the several cancer survivors who led the 150 participants around the first lap of the candlelit course on the grounds

of St Clair College. It was indeed an emotional start to a very special evening.

Over \$20,000 was raised at this very unique event, one that could be held in so many more communities next year. My congratulations to the organizers, the volunteers and all the participants who made this walk of hope and remembrance a huge success.

TUITION FEES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Ontario has now moved to the head of the pack. We are number one in the country when it comes to the cost of getting a university education.

According to a survey by USC Education Savings Plans, when all things are considered — tuition, board and books — it costs \$10,348 a year to go to university in Ontario. Nova Scotia, the only other province to have deregulated tuition fees, is still slightly ahead of us in tuition costs, but we are catching up fast.

Ontario university students face the biggest tuition fee increase in the country this year. Fees have gone up 71% in Ontario in the last five years, thanks to hikes by both the NDP and the Tories. But under Mike Harris and his deregulation, we'll see even higher fees in the future. Fees in some deregulated programs have risen 50% to 100% this year. By next September, medical students at the University of Toronto will be paying \$11,000 a year for tuition alone.

What does this mean to students? It means soaring debts that cripple them on graduation. The loan default costs went up again last year — in fact they doubled — from \$63 million to \$126 million. They had doubled the year before that and they are expected to increase again next year. That means graduates are in more debt than they can pay off.

Instead of helping to keep the debt down, the Harris government keeps driving it higher and higher. Ontario graduates aren't facing a world of opportunities in Mike Harris's Ontario; they're facing a lifetime of loan repayments and bad credit ratings.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Ontario's health system has failed Kevin Bushey.

On September 16 he arrived at Blind River's health centre with a lacerated cornea and the iris coming out the laceration. A piece of metal was still in his eye.

He was given a tetanus shot but no pain medication. He was driven 165 kilometres to the St Joseph's Health Centre in Sudbury in the company vehicle. He had immediate surgery to fix the cornea and iris. Because Sudbury didn't have the expertise to remove the metal, he was sent to Toronto the next day.

He was told the following: He would be taken by air ambulance to Toronto Hospital, Western Division, register at emergency, be taken immediately to the eye clinic and surgery would be done. He could not have an escort on the air ambulance. He was not given any pain medic-

ation to take with him. His wife had to drive him to the Sudbury airport to catch the air ambulance as no land ambulance was available. At the airport she was then told she could go with him.

The air ambulance landed instead at Toronto Island Airport. There was no land ambulance to meet him. Kevin had to walk on to the ferry and take it across to catch a cab to the hospital.

At emergency, Kevin was told that patients who came in ambulances would be seen first. His wife explained what arrangements had already been made. The receptionist said he'd have to wait. An emergency nurse was told the same story. She said she needed someone from ophthalmology to give her instructions before he could go to the eye clinic. She finally found a doctor to give him pain medication six hours after the last dose.

After three and a half hours in emergency, he was finally sent to the eye clinic. The receptionist asked him where he had been as they had been waiting for him all day. He had three hours of surgery to remove the metal from his eye.

The Minister of Health must investigate this —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Statements.

BRAMPTON BATTALION

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): This Friday night, October 9, marks an important date in Brampton sports history. Our new addition to the Ontario Hockey League, the Brampton Battalion, will play their home opener against the Kitchener Rangers.

On December 3, 1996, Scott Abbot, co-inventor of Trivial Pursuit, was awarded the OHL franchise for Brampton. Over 40,000 ballots of support were gathered from our residents to select a team and the Battalion name was chosen in January of this year.

Battalion will play their home games in our new 5,000-seat bunker called the Brampton Sports and Entertainment Centre, which includes three other ice pads and a 360-seat restaurant. It was entirely built without taxpayers' dollars.

The centre held its gala opening last night for the public, hosted by CFRB morning man Ted Woloshyn and included special guests like Canadian medallists Josée Chouinard and Elvis Stojko.

Battalion's strong staff are led by president Greg McNamara, director of hockey operations and coach Stan Butler, and assistant coaches Rob O'Brien and Luigi Villa.

The Brampton Battalion will be a great team. They'll be complemented by a number of off-ice activities over the winter including a tailgate party, tacky tourist night and jeep race. The Battalion mascot, Sarge, will be on hand to lead our team forward to beat those corny ice dogs.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Mr Speaker, I would like to add my congratulations to

Ontario's farmers today as we continue to celebrate Agri-food Week.

Too often the work done by our farming community is underestimated and undervalued in today's society.

As you know, recently the international plowing match and farm machinery show was held in Sunbury, just outside of Kingston. The event was superbly organized by Ken Keyes, a former member from Kingston and The Islands in this House, and his hundreds of volunteers. Close to 100,000 people visited the IPM and farm machinery show, whose theme this year was "Quality Living/A Partnership" between the agricultural and urban communities. Congratulations to Ken and all for a tremendously successful event.

Once again a VIP plowing match was held. I thought you would be interested in seeing what the winner of the VIP plowing contest received. Here it is, something I will proudly display on my desk as the winner of this year's match.

I want to assure all the members of this Legislature that for once we were a united team. I want to tell you that I won this trophy and accept it as a win by the Ontario Legislature against the federal House.

But to the members across the floor and the third party, let this trophy be a reminder. Here in the Liberal caucus we have a winning team, and we are set to grasp another trophy, which will not be shared with you, whenever the Premier decides to issue the challenge and call the next provincial election.

1340

UNITED WAY

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): In Sault Ste Marie again this year we've kicked off the United Way campaign, led by the able persons of Mike McEwan and Donna Irving, who will do an extraordinary job, just as the leaders of last year's campaign did. The theme chosen for this year's Sault Ste Marie United Way campaign is the same as last year, "Building an Extraordinary Community," because we who live in Sault Ste Marie and call it home truly believe we have an extraordinary community. We're going to do everything in our power, in spite of the attack of this government, to make sure it continues to be just that.

In Sault Ste Marie, the United Way not only collects and spends money but goes through an exercise of prioritizing what the challenges are. This year we're going to focus on poverty, on access to health care, on jobs, because we have an extraordinarily high unemployment rate in our city, and we're going to be focusing on crime.

In Sault Ste Marie, we politicians have also joined in the quest to build an extraordinary community. We have what is called the round table there, where the mayor and the federal MP and the provincial MPP sit and work with groups like the United Way to decide together what it is we need to be doing in our city to respond in a proactive way to the challenges that face us, and to look ahead to

see what it is we might be facing a year or five or 10 years down the road.

I encourage everybody to support the United Way.

HOSPICES

Mr Bob Wood (London South): Hospice Awareness Week is Sunday, October 11, to Saturday, October 16, 1998. It is entirely appropriate that Thanksgiving falls within Hospice Awareness Week.

The highly motivated and trained hospice volunteers of Ontario now number well over 10,000. Every month, new volunteers are trained by existing hospices, new hospices are created to meet specialized needs, or hospice organizations are formed in new areas, all important steps in meeting as much of the great unsatisfied need as is possible.

These volunteers, backed by dedicated medical professionals who often provide many volunteer services themselves, provide critical emotional and spiritual support and pain and symptom relief for those suffering. Volunteers also supply respite, information and other support for family caregivers.

Most importantly, they facilitate opportunities for moments of joy and reconciliation, particularly for those who face life-shortening illness, and for their families and friends as well.

Hospices and the volunteers often enable people to continue living at home or close to it. If necessary, they bring as much of family and home as possible to those who must have care in a nursing home or a hospital bed.

This year, the Ontario Hospice Association and the Canadian and Ontario palliative care associations, along with many of the other related 650 Canadian programs and services, are sponsoring "living lessons" as a step towards increasing the awareness of hospice care.

I ask all members of the House to join with me in recognizing and thanking these volunteers for the important contribution they make to the quality of life in our province.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I would ask that unanimous consent be given for a debate today on the need for urgent government action to combat homelessness and a declaration that a state of emergency exists in regard to homelessness across Ontario and especially in Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): This is just a request for unanimous consent for emergency debate. Agreed? I heard a no.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'd like to take this opportunity to invite all members to welcome a visitor in the Speaker's gallery: Señor Remigio Alvarez Andres, Minister of Tourism for the State of Morelos, Mexico. Please join me in welcoming him.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES UNION

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a question to the Chair of Management Board of Cabinet. Yesterday we came into possession of a 122-page secret document that gives explicit instructions to your managers in the event of a public servants' strike later this year. The document reads in part:

"You may use a contractor to do struck work. You could move struck work from a struck location to a non-struck location to be performed by a contractor but only with the minister's approval."

Sounds like scab work to us, Minister.

My question is very simple: Will you tell the people of Ontario today that in the event of a legal strike by Ontario's public servants you will not use scabs, contractors, temporary agencies or fee-for-service agencies to perform the work normally done by Ontario's public servants?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): The report the member of the opposition talks about is a lengthy document that is in preparation for disruption of service due to a strike. As everyone in this House knows, the collective agreement with OPSEU expires on December 31 of this year. We are starting the negotiation process and OPSEU has publicly stated that if there isn't a contract signed on December 31, they will withdraw their services.

Similar to what's happened in the past, we issue guidelines to managers on how to manage in the event of a strike. We intend to share that with the bargaining units. We would have shared it with them a week ago but they withdrew from the table. They will receive it. They will, consequently and subsequently, at the same time give to us their plan on how they will conduct their strike.

The first step in negotiations is negotiating the essential service agreement. That is going on. They temporarily withdrew from the table. I hope we will have a settlement that's in the interests of the taxpayers and also respects the hard work that our public service has done and this will be unnecessary.

Mr Duncan: Minister, there's nothing wrong with planning. We'd be surprised if you didn't have a plan. I certainly hope that you don't want a repeat of what happened two years ago, if this is in fact your plan. That was a disgrace not only to your government but to this province that was reported worldwide.

Our problem is that this plan very clearly indicates that you have no intention of bargaining in good faith, that in fact you're attempting to bully, you're attempting to threaten Ontario's public servants. You are talking, Minister, I will remind you, very clearly from this document about hiring scabs. Let's forget the plan. I just want to know from you: In the event of legal strike, are you prepared to use scabs to perform the work of Ontario's public servants?

Hon Mr Hodgson: Let me be clear. The member is correct when he states that this is prudent planning. It's done by organizations throughout the world that of this nature are large in size.

Like the federal government, we have the right to use replacement workers. We also think it's prudent that we get a plan out to instruct managers in all the uncertainties around the situation that might be created if there is a strike.

Like I stated before, we have an obligation and a responsibility to make sure that services are delivered to the public. We also want to, in good faith, bargain a collective agreement with our government employees, represented by OPSEU, before December 31. As the member knows, it takes two sides to reach an amicable agreement that all can live with.

1350

Mr Duncan: The minister has just said that they're going to use scabs, that the government clearly intends to do this. Let me ask the minister this, then: What do you think that does to negotiations? How do you think that affects the morale of public servants in this province? What does it say to public servants who in the last five years have seen their contracts stripped, have gone through the agony of a strike that they went through two years ago? What does it say to those public servants?

Will you admit now that you have no intention of negotiating in good faith? In fact, Minister, will you not admit that you'd like to provoke a strike and that you intend to use scabs? What are you going to do about it? Why won't you make sure that you negotiate in good faith instead of using threatening and bullying tactics against Ontario's hard-working public servants?

Hon Mr Hodgson: If the member of the Liberal Party is suggesting that we shouldn't take the time and outline in a comprehensive manner instructions to our managers, that's prudent planning. He agreed a question ago that that should take place. Like the federal government, we think it's prudent to share those plans with the bargaining agents and we're going to do that.

The bottom line is that we think it's possible to reach an agreement with OPSEU before December 31, but like I said, it takes two sides to negotiate in good faith. We're there and we're hopeful that will work out in the fullness of time.

I'm not sure of his point on the event that he talks about. If he's saying that releasing the plan and telling managers what to do in the event of labour disruption is wrong and somehow incites the situation, I disagree with him. If this is just a move to try to get the union dollars for the Liberal Party, I find that reprehensible. Leah Casselman, who represents OPSEU, and our negotiating team will be working from now —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is for the Minister of Health. For the first two years of your government you cut \$800 million from

hospitals in Ontario, you ordered the closure of 35 hospitals and you failed to provide funds on a timely basis.

This past Thursday, you specifically instructed your caucus to vote against a private member's resolution that would have helped all of those hospitals that are facing deficits and accumulated debt, even though we presented facts from many hospitals in many regions in Ontario that are now in the worst financial crisis they've seen. I'd like to know, if the situation wasn't so dire, why you would take the time to strong-arm the members of your own caucus to vote against the resolution?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I don't know how well you know the members of our caucus, but I can tell you they are very independent-minded individuals. I think it's quite an insult for you to suggest that anyone could persuade them to do something they were not inclined to do.

Mrs Papatello: Here is the letter that you as the Minister of Health sent to all your caucus colleagues. This is the letter you sent telling them to vote against the resolution. Clearly there are problems even in the caucus areas that they represent in their ridings. We know that the London Health Sciences Centre is facing \$6 million in deficits; the Cambridge hospital, \$2.2 million in deficits; the Ottawa Hospital, \$25 million in deficits by year's end; the Grand River Hospital, \$4 million, and the list goes on. We presented all of those succinctly last Thursday.

How can you continue to deny that Ontario hospitals are facing the worst crisis they've ever seen? The Ontario Hospital Association likewise clearly indicated unequivocally that hospitals in Ontario are facing extremely serious funding problems: "Over half of Ontario's hospitals are running deficits and these deficits are likely to be in excess of \$200 million in this fiscal year."

Minister, can you continue to deny that this problem —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon Mrs Witmer: The reality is, our government is taking an initiative which I can assure you yours has never done. We have set up a joint Ministry of Health task force with the OHA to discuss the funding issues that are related to the hospitals.

I have a quote here from the Toronto Star, September 21, 1988, "Health Minister Elinor Caplan has ordered the province's 222 hospitals to balance their \$5.5 billion budget, saying, 'The government will not bail out debt-ridden hospitals.'" It appears she didn't even talk and try to solve the problem.

Mrs Papatello: What I didn't say to you was that in your first two years of government you removed \$800 million from their budgets. We know in this House the response to that in communities. Yesterday we heard from Sudbury about a woman who was in an ER 14 hours until she fell on the floor and required stitches. We know the parents in Ottawa who had to take shifts to take care of their child or pay \$8,000 a month for nursing care. We know that in Windsor this summer alone there were 230 times when an ambulance could not discharge patients because the emergency rooms were clogged. Your own report from your ministry documents the reports of all the

hospital woes that are documenting the reports of this deficit that is causing only more reports to be written.

Why, Minister? Belleville, Hotel Dieu in Windsor, North York in Toronto, Woodstock, St Thomas Elgin, St John's in Toronto, and the list goes on, itemize financial crises in their hospitals. Will you continue to deny that this problem exists?

Hon Mrs Witmer: What I will say is what I said in my response the second time, that we are working with the Ontario Hospital Association because what we want to ensure is high-quality patient care. Let me again quote, this time from the Windsor Star, September 28, 1989: "Mr Bierman was one of about 120 Windsor area patients" —

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Windsor-Sandwich come to order, please.

Hon Mrs Witmer: "Mr Bierman was one of about 120 Windsor area patients who have been waiting as long as a year for open heart surgery at hospitals in London and Toronto. Several Windsor patients died of heart attacks while on the list. Last month, local cardiologists began advising high-risk patients to have the surgery done in Detroit area hospitals even if it costs them \$10,000–\$15,000."

That is your health record. We are going to ensure that we can provide this type of cardiac surgery. We're very proud of the fact that because of the additional reimbursements, we have been able to reduce our cardiac waiting lists.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I want to bring to the attention of the members, in the opposition members' gallery, from the last Legislature, the member for Scarborough East, Mr Bob Frankford. Welcome.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. This morning my colleague Rosario Marchese, the member for Fort York, attended an incredible news conference. More than 400 homeless people and their supporters packed Trinity church, a few blocks from here, to call for emergency action for the homeless.

Renowned scientist Ursula Franklin, public health nurse Cathy Crow and a number of advocates spoke movingly about the devastation your government has created in the area of housing and the number of people who are now homeless and living in the streets. This is a movement that's growing. Churches are becoming part of this movement, community organizations; even some developers are joining this movement.

Earlier this week the member for Fort York asked you to take urgent action on this. I'm asking you again today: Will you build the 5,000 urgently needed units for people —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): This is indeed a very important issue. I know it is a very complex issue and it is also very tragic when individuals find themselves in a situation where they are homeless. Our municipalities across this province have done a very good job. Here in Toronto we can see the many creative solutions that have come forward that are actually helping individuals to get linked up with housing or to get the other supports they need, whether it's mental health, substance abuse or whatever.

We support the call for a national strategy. I think that will be very helpful. We are working closely with Toronto and the other municipalities to continue to put forward more solutions that will help this. We continue to be a major funder of emergency shelters for people who find themselves homeless. That is something that has not been reduced, nor should it be reduced, because we believe it's a very important support for those municipalities. We will continue to support them in doing that.

1400

Mr Hampton: Minister, not only are you not doing anything about the homeless and this problem, what you are trying to do will make matters worse. By off-loading responsibility on to municipalities that don't have the budget, you'll make matters worse. You're trying to get the federal government to join your plan to download the rest of social housing on to municipalities.

I've got a leaked communications plan from the Ministry of Housing. It says on page 7, "In writing to the federal government, the minister will want to indicate that broad-based consensus has been achieved among the majority of stakeholders and request a meeting to start negotiations for a new social housing agreement, ie, for downloading."

Minister, there is no consensus. The co-op housing federation is here; they oppose you. Tenants oppose you. Just about every community action group out there opposes you on this. Where is this so-called consensus? Everybody is opposing the steps you're taking. Everybody is opposing you because you don't care about the homeless. Where's your consensus, Minister?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member is trying to equate that somehow if we don't rush out and throw money at a problem, a government doesn't care. One of the messages we heard very clearly when Mr Carroll was doing his consultation with municipalities and front-line providers was that there is a lot of money in the system but part of the problem is, because we have three levels of government involved in it, because we have a myriad of agencies involved in it, money that quite rightly should be going to those front-line workers, those front-line people who need that help, isn't; it has been caught in this crazy government process.

That's why concentrating those housing services with municipalities, with appropriate financial support — we continue to pay 80% of emergency hostels. I think that is appropriate, because that's backup they need to provide those services. We have, as a province, spent over \$100 million in terms of backing up those housing supports. The

question is, what productive solutions does the honourable member have, rather than sitting here saying the government doesn't care?

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): What we are saying to this minister is that she has done nothing on the issue of homelessness. We have a crisis on our hands, and it's a national disaster. This minister is saying, "We are linking people up; we're working with the cities, we're talking to them" year after year. We've got a national disaster.

At the same time, you and your Minister of Municipal Affairs are manufacturing consent with the federal government where there is none. You don't have the stakeholders here. You have shut out the tenants who pay over 59% of their housing. They have not been involved in those consultations. They have been completely shut out. The co-op sector, that provides valuable, healthy communities, says your social housing reform will destroy their communities. That's what everybody is saying.

Are you and the Minister of Municipal Affairs going to the federal government to have them believe that these tenants and the co-op sector are not stakeholders?

Hon Mrs Ecker: We have indeed consulted with not only all of those who are involved in social housing but also those who are helping to meet the needs of homeless people on the streets across this country. The honourable member is saying somehow or other nothing has happened. I beg to differ.

We have spent over \$100 million on supports and services for those who are homeless. We pay 80% of those emergency shelters, which I think is appropriate, to give municipalities that backup. We have \$2.5 million in additional funding from health for front-line mental health support workers. We have another \$4 million that we're going to be allocating to municipalities, consistent with the recommendations from our task force, consulting with Anne Golden. We have fewer people on social assistance. We have the most generous social assistance and disability rates in this country to help those people. We've taken back domiciliary supportive housing, because we know that is something that needs to be better linked up with health services. We have done many things.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES UNION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. Since the Chair of Management Board has been around this Legislature for a few years, he will remember that it was the NDP government that brought legislation before this House outlawing the use of scabs in Ontario workplaces. You will remember that your party voted against that legislation and the Liberal Party voted against that legislation. You will also remember that in the last election your government said that you would change the law and bring scabs back into the workplace and the Liberal Party said they would change the law and bring scabs back into the workplace.

I want to get to the point of the headline that was in a couple of today's papers, the headline which says that you are considering using scabs in any negotiations of a collective agreement with OPSEU. I'm going to ask you here, will you categorically say here that you will not use scabs?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I was interested to hear the leader's rendition of the Liberal position on this issue. I think that's very factually correct.

As he knows, the OPSEU agreement expires on December 31 this year, and we're in the midst of negotiating. The first step is the essential services, and then, from that, we hope to reach an agreement. As he knows, Leah Casselman, the representative for OPSEU, has publicly stated that if they do not have a collective agreement signed by December 31 this year there will be a withdrawal of labour or a strike. So it's prudent, similar to past practice, similar to 1996 when the last collective agreement came into place, that we issue some guidelines to our managers. We intend to share that with the bargaining unit of OPSEU, and they will also share with us their strike plan. We hope, and I'm sure they hope, that we never have to implement that plan, but it is a good comprehensive plan.

Mr Hampton: I wanted you to clearly indicate that you have no plans to use scabs and you will not use scabs. I'm going to give you another chance at that, because you must be aware, for example, that at J.B. Fields in Trenton the employer has used scabs and it has caused a huge rift in that community. In Red Lake, in Balmertown, Goldcorp, scabs have been used, and it has caused the longest ongoing labour dispute in Ontario gold mining history.

You must know that when you use scabs, you create incredible hostility and you create the environment for intimidation. This is not the way to negotiate collective agreements. I'm going to ask you again, will you categorically state here that you have no plans to use scabs and you will not use scabs should a dispute develop with OPSEU?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As the leader of the third party knows, the employees have a legal right to strike under the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act, which was passed in 1994. The NDP gave OPSEU and the government employees the right to strike. Having done that, it's our responsibility and our obligation to make sure that we have plans in place if that unfortunate reality occurs. Having said that, it's also our responsibility and our obligation as a government to make sure that we deliver services to the public. We think it's responsible and prudent to issue a comprehensive plan, guidelines to our managers, which we share with the bargaining units, on how it would be conducted if there was a strike and the precautions that should be taken.

But I want to stress to this House that we're negotiating in good faith and it's our hope that we will be able to come to an amicable settlement which respects the professionalism of our public servants who work on our behalf

and on the public's behalf and also respects the taxpayers' ability to pay.

1410

Mr Hampton: This is about the tactics that you are prepared to use. One tactic would be to go to the bargaining table and to say, "We want to achieve a collective agreement and we have no desire to use scabs." I would suggest to you that you could achieve a collective agreement by doing that.

The other way, and I have great fear this is the way you are setting up, would be to threaten to use scabs, to release a document like this which shows your intention to potentially use scabs, in which case you create quite a different scenario for collective bargaining. You can approach this from a positive direction. You can approach it from a very negative direction. What you're doing is setting up for the worst kind of outcome.

You've forced a number of conflicts with teachers across this province. You've forced conflicts with a number of other organizations across this province. Is that what you want here, another conflict? Is that what you're trying to force, another conflict? If so, don't. It doesn't work. Avoid it.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I think everyone would agree that it's prudent to inform managers that if we end up in an unfortunate situation of a strike, they would have some guidelines on how to conduct operations. That's a comprehensive plan. It's not lightly done. It's similar to what's done in other large organizations. It's similar to what's done in the federal government, for example.

If the member is giving us advice on the negotiating mandate, I would like to remind him to check out the former Premier of the province's book when he talks about negotiations with OPSEU and the fact that your government couldn't even come to an agreement.

We've planned, with good-faith bargaining, to come up with an agreement that respects the professionalism of our public servants where we won't need to enter into a period where there is a withdrawal of service. It takes two sides to do that. We're trying to negotiate that in good faith. The issue that you talk about today is a preparation document. We think it's responsible and prudent and we'll be sharing that with the bargaining units, and they will be sharing with us what they would do if unfortunately we couldn't reach an agreement by December 31 of this year.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. I'd hoped to put a question to the Premier, but he's not here today.

We have a disaster on our hands. This disaster is homelessness, and as you know, it's on the rise. Unlike other disasters, it has not received a quick response from governments.

Are you prepared today to admit that homelessness is a crisis in this province by signing this petition which I'll send over to you, which is distributed by the Disaster Relief of Homelessness, and further, commit to

establishing a cabinet action committee made up of the Minister of Health, the Minister of Community and Social Services and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing so that they can respond immediately to this crisis?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I know that the Minister of Community and Social Services wants to answer this question.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I agree that the expertise of the Ministries of Health, Community and Social Services and Housing, for example, are very appropriate to addressing the needs of people who find themselves to be homeless. That is why the task force that Mr Jack Carroll, my parliamentary assistant, chairs does have representation from those different ministries, because we quite recognize that when we are trying to support our municipal partners in dealing with homelessness, we need a wide variety of support.

For example, we have increased funding. The Ministry of Health has put forward over \$2.5 million in funding for mental health support workers to help people who are homeless, who have particular difficulty. We cost share, as I mentioned previously, on emergency shelters. We are working to get more people off welfare and into paid jobs, for example, so they don't have to be relying on social assistance.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mrs Ecker: So there are a range of strategies we have undertaken. We will continue to do that as we support cities like Toronto that are doing —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Curling: Your strategy and your study isn't working, and you know it. You know it is not working. What we need to do is respond to this emergency and this disaster right now, immediately.

It has been your government that has eliminated social housing. It is your government that has increased costs for health care. It is your government that reduced the welfare and, as a matter of fact, you yourself applauded the fact, the subsidies to those who are on welfare. Maybe it is not evident enough for you to see that it's not working.

Maybe you and the two other ministers who don't seem to want to co-operate in all this would walk with me down University Avenue, walk with me along Queen Street. That's evidence enough of what your cutbacks and your policies are doing to the people. You are the main cause of this. I urge you, Madam Minister, and I urge your government, let us all go together and try to solve this disaster immediately.

Are you prepared now to establish a cabinet committee, an action committee to act immediately on this disaster, this emergency that we have today? Are you ready to do that?

Hon Mrs Ecker: We had already established a task force some time ago that has the expertise of this provincial government, the different ministries, and that is also working very closely with Anne Golden, who is doing

the Toronto task force to help devise further strategies in addition to what is being done to help address this issue. Anne Golden has talked about a national strategy, because it isn't just Toronto and it isn't just Ontario that is facing this challenge. The honourable member might well wish to join me in travelling to Ottawa to help convince them that we need to have a national strategy. That might well be a helpful thing to do.

We will continue to rely on our municipal partners to make the decisions about the capacity, the size of hostels, what they need in their communities. We will continue to financially back them up, as we do today, because we think that's an important support for us to give them.

YOUNG OFFENDER FACILITY

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): To the Minister of Community and Social Services, I've got a letter here that was sent to the staff at the William Hay Centre in Ottawa. It's a secure-custody facility for young offenders.

The letter was sent by a company called Eastern Ontario Young Offenders Services. William Hay is one of the facilities that you're privatizing as you abandon the operation of young offender facilities across the province. Eastern Ontario Young Offenders Services is a company that was formed by managers from William Hay. They are writing to say that they changed their mind about submitting a proposal to you to manage it. Here's the reason they give:

"On the basis of extensive research and consultation, we have concluded that the maximum allowable budget included in your RFP will not sustain staffing levels and quality service delivery." They go on to say that your budget will compromise the integrity of the William Hay Centre's programs.

Minister, these are professionals, these are experts, and they've decided that it's absolutely irresponsible to run a facility this way. When are you going to use some common sense? Stop using an ideological basis for your decisions. When are you going to withdraw this RFP?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): With all due respect, the honourable member says that somehow or other an ideology is supposed to be part of this. I would certainly disagree. Some 93% of the residential facilities that the Ministry of Community and Social Services has already run by community-based agencies, whether non-profit or private sector. That was a policy decision with the previous government which the member was part of. They were quite happy with that. They did not think that was a problem. It wasn't.

Those community agencies run those facilities extremely well, in a very cost-effective manner, very good quality services for the young people who are there. That's why we think the few remaining facilities which we have that are run by the ministry should be run the same way, so that not only do the young people get the best services

they can have, but also it will be done in the most cost-effective manner for the taxpayers.

Mr Kormos: Minister, please. What you've begun is the process of privatizing secure-custody facilities. These aren't shoplifters; these aren't first offenders who are contained in these facilities. These are some of the most dangerous and disturbed young people in the province. These are young people with serious problems who pose a real threat to their communities. These are the facilities that you're privatizing in this move towards privatization. Communities rely on the fact that these facilities have been safe and secure because their staff and management were highly trained professionals who were accountable to the government, to you.

You've said that your decision to privatize these facilities has nothing to do with cost savings. You've said it has nothing to do with improving the quality of services. So you're putting our communities at risk —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question?

Mr Kormos: The tentative bidder has withdrawn their proposal, saying your budget will not allow them to run William Hay and its programs with the integrity that was there —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

1420

Hon Mrs Ecker: I think the bottom line here is quality services, standards that are being administered and adhered to now by community agencies, both non-profit and private sector, that currently run the majority of our young offender facilities, including secure custody facilities. There's a proven track record with that delivery. It has worked extremely well. That's why we are continuing to do it. If the honourable member is questioning the professionalism of those members of community agencies, many of whom are also members of unions which this member supports, if he thinks they are not competent, he should say so. We have seen they have a good track record and that's what we are building on.

This particular step is to ensure that these facilities are provided according to our standards. Those are the same standards that our community agencies are currently meeting. They meet not only the needs of the young people who are in those young offender facilities, but they also meet the safety standards of communities. Not only that, it has been a very cost-effective mechanism, and we will continue to build on that.

HOME CARE

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere): My question is directed to the Minister of Long-Term Care. As you know, Ontario's seniors population is growing daily. In fact, it's expected to double within the next 20 years. With more seniors living longer, there's a growing demand for home care services — visiting nurses, physiotherapy and homemaking. What is the government doing to meet these needs?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Long-Term Care, minister responsible for seniors): I'd like to

thank the honourable member for the question and indicate clearly that this government has made a very strong and early commitment to build the infrastructure, 43 new CCACs in our province. This has enhanced access to important services and allows seniors and disabled persons to live with greater independence in their communities.

In Ontario we have increased funding by \$346 million in three short years. This is one of the largest areas of expansion in health care. We are today spending \$1.2 billion in total, which is more than all the other provinces in Canada. We're very proud of our record of building this infrastructure and providing the highest access for any Canadian senior or disabled person right here in Ontario.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you for that answer. Home care is not covered by the Canada Health Act and people need reassurances that their communities are getting their fair share of these services, something that was not assured by the previous two governments, I might add.

Last year you were responsible for the creation of a new access centre for Scarborough. Why was Scarborough given a separate access centre, and what are you doing to ensure fair shares of these important services for all municipalities?

Hon Mr Jackson: When this government was elected three years ago, we found out that the distribution of health dollars was done in a very discriminatory manner. We found that seniors in one part of this province were receiving four times as much service as other parts of the province. We were surprised to learn that right here in Toronto, the Metro home care program was also dividing these dollars up in a most unfair manner. That's why we decided to put in place a community board in the communities of Scarborough and York and throughout the old Metro area.

We have increased funding in Metro by \$120 million in three years. That's a 56% increase. We found three years ago that seniors in Scarborough were receiving about \$39 of service per person, while their next-door neighbours in Toronto were receiving over \$70 per senior. We have abandoned this discriminatory model and produced an equity model. Today, under our government's commitment, Scarborough's seniors and disabled are finally getting their fair share of home care dollars.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of Health. You will recall perhaps that in the last session, in June of this year, the Leader of the Opposition, Dalton McGuinty, raised an issue with the Premier regarding Ian Strathern, who is a quadriplegic who resides in Niagara Falls. Ian was left a quadriplegic after he broke his neck in a sports accident in 1995. He's on a life support ventilator and requires 24-hour care from your government or from the Ministry of Health.

Unfortunately, Mr David Strathern is spending \$1,500 a week — that's about \$6,000 a month — caring for his

son. That's out of their own money. Of course, that's very stressful on the family as a result of that for a variety of reasons.

The Ministry of Health apparently is going to an appeal hearing —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mr Bradley: — speaking against this appeal by the family. Would you assure us that you'll withdraw that objection?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Mr Speaker, I'll refer that to the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Long-Term Care, minister responsible for seniors): I would like to advise the member opposite that I am aware of the tragic circumstances around this individual. I'm prevented, without the family's permission, from referring to him directly. I know that not only the member for St Catharines but the member for Niagara Falls has been working very hard to look at the situation and the circumstances that this family is coping with.

As was stated earlier in this House, all of these long-term-care services that Canadians have come to appreciate and need are outside of the Canada Health Act and, as such, no province in this country is providing 24-hour care. There are programs available that have been put in place in this province and others to deal with cases where tragically the circumstances of life have left people handicapped.

The Speaker: Answer.

Hon Mr Jackson: I simply want to assure the member opposite that as our government continues to work closely with the family, and we are doing so through the local member, we are looking for solutions to help this —

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr Bradley: The family is somewhat desperate in these circumstances. They attended a Conservative fundraiser in St Catharines on March 7 to put the case forward because they knew the Premier would be there. When the Leader of the Opposition, Dalton McGuinty, was in St Catharines speaking to the chamber of commerce, Mr Strathern came to the microphone to ask if any progress had been made in this regard.

Earlier this year, the Niagara Community Care Access Centre turned down the appeal by the family for nursing help beyond the maximum it said it was allowed: 53 hours per week. For the Strathern family, home nursing help is essential to ensure that Ian does not have to live in an institution. The family is dipping into its own savings to the tune of \$1,500 a week and it going to be in dire financial straits as a result. This reminds me not of our province of Ontario; it reminds of the United States, where people almost go bankrupt trying to meet their medical needs.

Minister, would you ask the Minister of Health to withdraw the objection that the Ministry of Health is putting into this appeal? They are going to appear against the Strathern family in an appeal process.

Hon Mr Jackson: I wanted to indicate to the member opposite that in the conversation that has been had with the family regarding this tragic case, they have indicated

that they are seeking less the sensationalism around the key issues of access to the programs, but rather that they are trying to work out a range of options that might be available to this family, and we are still in that process. I want to be careful, but my understanding is the family has said, "We do not want our son embroiled as a political football on a very important and sensitive issue."

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Do something.

Hon Mr Jackson: I believe that if I had the authority — to the member's interjection — to make some further statements in this chamber, the members opposite would be surprised to learn about the considerable amount of effort that's been going on in this community, and in co-operation with the local member in Niagara Falls, to find some solutions for this family. That is what this government is prepared to do. That is what we are proceeding with and we're prepared to do that. However, I must say that no province in Canada is providing 24-hour unfettered access for the —

The Speaker: New question, third party.

YOUNG SEXUAL OFFENDERS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): To the Minister of Community and Social Services: I recently received a letter accompanying this report entitled The Adolescent Sexual Offender Project: A 10-Year Follow-up Study. This study is the first of its kind in Canada by virtue of its size, its use of a comparison group and, most important, its findings, which demonstrate that a comprehensive treatment program can reduce criminal reoffending by as much as 73%. The letter that accompanies the report alleges that your ministry prevented the publishers of the report, a directly run program of your ministry, from notifying the media about the release of the report. Let me quote:

"The government does not, in the months before an election, want to have anything presented that does not fit with their law-and-order agenda.... In effect, they are hindering the effective intervention with this population because it does not suit their political needs."

1430

I don't understand. You guys are pretty good at holding press conferences and announcing all sorts of things that you think are good news. Why the silence on this? It seems like good news to me.

Will you assure us that you have not shelved this important report which shows the efficacy of treatment rather than the simplistic "shame 'em and punish 'em" approach of your Crime Control Commission?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I am not aware of the memo or the report. I'd be very pleased to take a look at the situation. I'm always very interested in any information, especially research-based information, that shows how we can improve our young offender facilities, both in the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of the Solicitor General. Trying to prevent young people from

reoffending again, trying to prevent them from getting into young offender facilities is a goal the honourable member and I share.

Ms Lankin: It's a problem that you don't know about the report. It's a report of your ministry. Our concern is that it's sitting on a shelf gathering dust.

Let me quote a couple of experts with respect to this.

Sue Hunter, the executive director of the Toronto Child Abuse Centre, says, "One of the things this report really indicates is that treatment has the capacity to work for teen sexual offenders and that we shouldn't just move them into punishment."

Dr Howard Barbaree, chief of forensics at the Clarke, says: "I have nothing but good things to say about this program.... They meet the highest standards and do a superb job. This program is a much-preferred approach to treating the young sex offender rather than the punitive approach." He says that research shows the punitive approach just doesn't work in reducing recidivism.

Given that research shows that most adult sexual offenders began offending as a teen and that before an adult offender is identified they've assaulted upwards of 300 times, intervention with teens is absolutely critical. Surely you don't want to contribute to making teens hardened criminals with hundreds of notches on their belts. Will you commit to removing this report off the shelf and into action?

Hon Mrs Ecker: As I said previously to the honourable member, I'm quite prepared to look into the circumstances around this particular report. We frequently and often seek out information about how we can do a better job to support young people who are in young offender facilities. Obviously public safety has to be one of the prime concerns here, but if it is possible to prevent a young person from turning into an adult who is also going to offend, of course that's our goal. For her to suggest otherwise is quite erroneous.

I had the privilege of being part of a consultation exercise looking at the strict discipline facility, and one of the things we heard very clearly and which very much shaped our recommendations was the need for good rehabilitation, the need for good steps to protect public safety and the need for follow-up, because all of those things prevent recidivism, and that's certainly what we want to achieve.

ONTARIO WORKS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. I read in the local press in the past week that on Tuesday you were in Brantford to survey the success of the local Ontario Works program in that area. I too had the pleasure of meeting with the director of our Ontario Works program in Oxford in this past week to discuss how that program was faring. I was wondering if you could tell me and my constituents and all the members of the House what you heard on your visit to Brampton.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): One of the privileges I have had is to travel around to different locations where Ontario Works, our work-for-welfare program, is being provided and have the opportunity to meet with individuals who are participating.

In this case, there were several individuals. I must say I was very pleased to hear how the program we had was actually helping them. One individual was a single mother who talked about the child care support she had received and the work experience she was getting, which was going to get her into a job. We had another one who had actually landed a job. One of the community agencies that has been providing community placements for individuals on welfare talked about the success they have had with some of the placements, some of the individuals who have gone through their organization. So it was a very good meeting, and I was pleased to hear yet again that Ontario Works is working for those individuals on welfare by getting them off and into paid jobs.

Mr Hardeman: Thank you very much, Madam Minister. I'm glad to hear that the response you got in Brantford was indeed the same as I heard from our director as to how well the program was working in Oxford.

Yesterday in the House you told us that the number of people on welfare had declined by some 20,000. This is an unprecedented decline. Could you tell us what this means?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I'd be very pleased to do so. We had last month the largest drop in our caseload that we have experienced in some two years. Over the last three years we've seen a steady decline downward. We have over 323,000 fewer people trapped on welfare today, people who are now off welfare because of our economic reforms and our welfare reforms. I'd also like to stress that that's over 130,000 fewer children who are trapped on welfare.

In Oxford county, for example, over 32% have left the welfare system. This is a saving of approximately \$12 million for the taxpayers there. It's good news for taxpayers, it's good news for those people who are no longer on welfare and who are out there working, and it's certainly been good news for our community.

It was a very successful visit. I look forward to continuing to travel around the province to meet individuals on welfare whose lives are being helped by the supports we've put into place.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. You may have noticed on your drive in this morning that gasoline prices have rocketed some five cents a litre in the city. Let us quickly review what your ministry has done about this in the past.

In your May 14, 1998, press release you boasted: "We're gathering evidence to continue the fight against the price-gouging of Ontarians." As far back as August 1997, Premier Harris, when he was playing the competition cop, said: "My own personal opinion is they're

being gouged." Premier Harris also said, "Ontario will do what it can to bring the oil companies to heel, including regulating prices."

What's happened? Nothing. Your attempt at sending out gas-busters was nothing but a publicity stunt. There are five million Ontarians who are gas-busters out there, and prices are going up five to eight cents a litre. Your engine's sputtering, Minister. Why don't you put some octane in it and do something?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I thank the member for the question. I know he's genuinely concerned, as are all of us. The Premier and I have certainly expressed our concerns about price increases and the volatility of gas prices across the province, as did previous governments, particularly the Liberal government in the province in those days.

I want to tell you there are a number of things. First of all, if you recall, at the last provincial ministers' conference, through the initiative of the province of Ontario, we were able to establish a joint committee made up of the federal government and the provinces and territories, but with consumers as well, to make sure there is transparency to this, for us to actually have some evidence to do something here.

I might add that it's very interesting that the Consumer Watchdog Commission, who have been dubbed the gas-busters in this province, chaired ably by Lillian Ross, my parliamentary assistant — it's kind of interesting and coincidental, I suppose, that the first long weekend since the summer that they did not raise awareness about this issue was the first time gas prices have dramatically increased.

Mr Crozier: If you are not prepared to protect the consumers of Ontario, why did the Premier say that he would bring the oil companies to heel and then do nothing? Why did you say you're gathering evidence to continue the fight against the price-gouging of Ontario consumers and then do nothing? Why is it you send your gas-busters out with their Polaroids and you do nothing? Minister, when are you going to do your job and do something about gasoline prices that have nothing to do with the market and everything to do with holiday weekends?

1440

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I will remind the member that when we actually embarked upon this I indicated that what we were trying to do with the Consumer Watchdog Commission was gather evidence for me to report back to the provincial ministers' conference, which incidentally will be taking place next month. The consumers out there in the province are assisting us in this. We've had a lot of response to the hotline we established for us to gather the evidence.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I appreciate your ability to really stop some of the backfiring going on over there from the Liberal benches.

Next week the Consumer Watchdog Commission is meeting with the Canadian Petroleum Products Institute, and I have a funny feeling that when they do meet they're certainly going to be indicating that they don't like price volatility in this province.

MP Dan McTeague and many of his Liberal colleagues, in their gas pricing report, are calling on his own Liberal government to strengthen the Competition Act. Maybe you could pick up the phone and call —

The Speaker: Thank you.

New question, leader of the third party.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. The Minister of Health will know that on May 14 Mike Harris went to the community of Ear Falls and promised the community health centre there, which was shut down at the time because of your government's actions, that they would receive \$300,000 a year in funding so they could reopen. The community health centre took Mike Harris at his word. They reopened the doors of the clinic, they hired a nurse and support staff, and they contracted for some physicians to come to the community three times a week.

It's now five months later and the community health centre hasn't seen any of the \$300,000 that Mike Harris promised. In fact, the municipality has had to fork over \$26,000 to keep the community health centre open. Minister, where is the \$300,000 that Mike Harris promised when he was in Ear Falls? Is it coming or is this just another one of your empty, phony health care announcements?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): We certainly have been recognizing and moving forward in order that we can address the unique needs of the northern communities. When I was up to Sudbury recently I indicated that there were three additional communities that would be subsidized through the global group practice initiative. I will follow up and if there is an issue I'll share that with you.

Mr Hampton: Minister, the problem is bigger, deeper and broader than that. The fact of the matter is that people from this community, from Ear Falls, have been in touch with the minister responsible for northern development, they've been in touch with the Premier's office, and your government keeps saying, "The cheque's in the mail." We live in the age of electronic transfers. If you said last week that the cheque's in the mail, it should have arrived the same day. But the money isn't there.

The problem the community has is that they know you also announced \$36 million to help attract and retain doctors, specialists and nurse practitioners in northern Ontario. They haven't seen any of that money either. They also know that you announced \$5 million to help attract nurse practitioners especially in northern Ontario. They haven't seen any of that money. They know it hasn't been spent.

Minister, you've got a credibility problem here. You and the Premier go from community to community making

these announcements and then nothing ever happens. When is it going to happen, or are these just phony announcements?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'm very pleased to say that a tremendous amount has happened under the leadership of our government. We have recognized the unique needs of northern communities. As you know, we have the Scott sessional fee, the \$70 per hour that now applies to 78 hospitals. We very recently completed a tour for all the underserved communities. They had an opportunity to visit the university locations here in order to go through the process of recruitment. We have the medical services corps.

When it comes to globally funded group practices, I am very pleased to say that we have provided funding already to communities. We are in discussions with other communities. When it comes to the \$5 million regarding the nurse practitioners, we are presently in communication with communities. We are now gauging their needs and they are providing the information in order that we can provide the additional services that are required.

As I say, we have, as a government, moved forward —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, member for Durham East.

VEHICLE SAFETY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I was very interested in the response from the Minister of Health.

My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Clearly our Minister of Transportation is a minister who puts road safety first. Last week in my riding, and indeed all over Ontario, constituents were celebrating the seat belt challenge. I would ask the minister to tell me about this, how the volunteers in my community were stopping or observing cars to observe the number of people who were properly wearing their seat belts. Minister, could you tell the people of Ontario just how important wearing a seat belt is and the result of your observations last week?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): I thank the honourable member for the question. I'm very pleased to be part of the launch of the fifth annual one-day seat belt challenge. On Saturday an estimated 1,300 volunteers across 130 Ontario communities proudly wore their seat belt challenge T-shirts and counted the number of drivers who were properly wearing seat belts.

We've received some of the preliminary results and so far they show that some communities had over 90% seat belt use rate. Last year they counted use in more than 327,000 vehicles and that rate was 84%. So we're up 6%. We want to get to that 95% rate by 2001. I think we're well on our way.

If I could add one comment at the end of this question period, please remember, everyone, buckle up.

VISITORS

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Mr Speaker, I want to draw to your attention and the House's attention the presence in the gallery of some special guests from the

province of Alentejo in Portugal. They are the mayor of Aljustrel, Antonio Jose Godinho, and the mayor of Almodavar, Manuel Lopes Ribeiro, accompanied by Jose Luis Lopes, the president of the Casa do Alentejo community centre, which this week is celebrating its cultural week. I would like to welcome them to Queen's Park.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 37(a), I wish to advise you of my dissatisfaction with the response of the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations to my question on gasoline prices. The reason is the minister did not provide an answer that included a solution.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Please file the appropriate papers.

1450

PETITIONS

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Mike Harris has imposed skyrocketing taxes on small business owners in Windsor because of his government's downloading debacle;

"Whereas many small business owners in Windsor who pay commercial property taxes face tax increases of more than 100%;

"Whereas the Harris government tax assessment system is confusing, chaotic and an administrative nightmare for municipalities;

"Whereas the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers called the Harris tax assessment system a 'high-risk strategy' that will create 'serious problems' for taxpayers and municipalities; and

"Whereas Windsor small businesses facing massive tax increases will be forced to pass on these increases to their customers, causing a decrease in business and causing the Ontario economy to suffer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to devise a fair and uncomplicated system of tax assessment."

I'm pleased to join the merchants of the Riverside business improvement area in signing this petition.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 80 people.

"Whereas most Ontario residents require adequate access to effective palliative care in time of need;

"Whereas meeting the needs of Ontarians of all ages for relief of preventable pain and suffering, as well as the provision of emotional and spiritual support, should be a priority to our health care system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to resolve that a task force be appointed to develop a palliative care bill of rights that would ensure the best possible treatment, care, protection and support for Ontario's citizens and their families in time of need. The task force should include palliative care experts in pain management, community palliative care and ethics in order to determine effective safeguards for the right to life and care of individuals who cannot or who can no longer decide issues of medical care for themselves. The appointed task force would provide interim reports to the government and the public and continue in existence to review the implementation of its recommendations."

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I have a petition on red light cameras. It says:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas red light cameras can dramatically assist in reducing the number of injuries and deaths resulting from red light runners; and

"Whereas red light cameras only take pictures of licence plates, thus reducing privacy concerns; and

"Whereas all revenues from violations can easily be directed to a designated fund to improve safety and enforcement at high-collision intersections; and

"Whereas there is a growing disregard for traffic laws resulting in serious injury to pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and especially children and seniors; and

"Whereas the provincial government has endorsed the use of a similar camera system to collect tolls on the new Highway 407 tollway; and

"Whereas the mayor, council and concerned citizens of Toronto have been seeking permission to deploy these cameras due to limited police resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario support and provide financial assistance for, number one, a pilot project and, number two, the subsequent installation of red light cameras at high-collision intersections to monitor and prosecute motorists who run red lights."

I've affixed my signature as well.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): "Whereas the Harris government's 'downloading' to municipal taxpayers is directly responsible for the \$36.3-million shortfall to the region of Hamilton-Wentworth; and

"Whereas the Harris government 'downloading' is directly responsible for creating a property tax crisis in our region; and

"Whereas the Harris government, while boasting about its 30% tax cut which benefits mainly the wealthy, is making hard-working families, seniors, homeowners and

businesses pay the price with outrageous property tax hikes and user fees for services; and

"Whereas city and regional councillors are being unfairly blamed and forced to explain these huge tax hikes, Hamiltonians know that what's really going on is that they are being forced to pay huge property tax increases to fund Harris's 30% tax giveaway to the rich; and

"Whereas homeowners, including seniors and low-income families, are facing huge property tax increases ranging from several hundred to thousands of dollars; and

"Whereas the Harris government 'downloading' has led to huge property tax increases for business that will force many small and medium-sized businesses in Hamilton-Wentworth to close or leave the community, putting people out of work; and

"Whereas Hamilton-Wentworth region is proposing that the Harris government share in the costs of an expanded rebate program, worth about \$3 million region-wide;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Harris government immediately eliminate the \$38-million downloading shortfall that is devastating and angering homeowners as well as killing businesses in Hamilton-Wentworth."

I continue to support these petitioners.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and to sell chemicals and devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields, and suffered other forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas the health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical and accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience of health care workers, prohibiting coercion of and unjust discrimination against health care workers

because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination.”

It's signed by a great number of my constituents, and we present it on their behalf.

DENTAL CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a new schedule of dental services for children and people with disabilities was introduced by the government under the Ontario Works Act and the Ontario Disability Support Program Act; and

“Whereas the new schedule fails to meet the special needs of children and people with disabilities, reduces services, places barriers to accessing care and creates an environment for various different dental programs across Ontario; and

“Whereas the move away from an emphasis on prevention under the new dental schedule brings significant health risks for children and people with disabilities who are often least able to practise good oral hygiene; and

“Whereas the new dental schedule interferes with the patients' rights to consent to treatment by requiring administrators, and not patients or substitute decision-makers, to authorize and deny dental treatment; and

“Whereas there is no method for the patient to appeal a decision by a plan administrator to deny dental treatment; and

“Whereas pre-authorizations, called predeterminations in the new plan, will require that a higher level of confidential patient health information be disclosed to dental plan administrators; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has caused confusion among patients by introducing the plan without adequate consultation and has not included any affected patient groups in consultations after releasing the new dental plan;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Delay full implementation of the new dental plan until the requirement for predeterminations is removed, patient confidentiality is protected, the plan emphasizes prevention in oral health care, and the government consults directly with affected patients to ensure the new plan will meet the special needs of children and people with disabilities.”

This is signed by people in Port Colborne, Welland, Thorold and St Catharines. I affix my signature in agreement with the petition.

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): “Whereas many Ontarians have been infected with the hepatitis C virus as a result of transfusions using contaminated blood; and

“Whereas the current compensation package only provides funding for those people infected between the years 1986 to 1990; and

“Whereas in Canada, there are at least 20,000 surviving victims who were infected with hepatitis C before 1986, who placed their faith in the blood system and are now suffering; and

“Whereas the Krever commission recommended that all victims be compensated;

“Now therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario, on behalf of the victims, and their families, in support of the Ontario government's call for a compensation package for Ontarians who are infected with the hepatitis C virus through the blood system prior to 1986, and that pending a resolution of federal liability for the contaminated blood problem, Ontario agree in the interim that such new package be funded by the Ontario and the federal government on the same basis as the federal-provincial agreement covering 1986-90. We call on the government of Canada to do the right thing.”

I affix my signature to this.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a petition here from over 600 concerned parents from the St Alphonsus school community who are very concerned that the minister is about to close 200 schools in Toronto.

“We, the undersigned supporters of keeping St Alphonsus Catholic school open, request the Minister of Education to give parents an opportunity for full and proper input by extending the deadline for the review of the school's future beyond the November 15, 1998, deadline.”

I've got 600 names, and I'll affix my name to the petition.

1500

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): The petition reads as follows:

“Whereas the Harris funding cutbacks are having a devastating impact on hospitals and patient care across Ontario, and have resulted in an anticipated \$38-million deficit at the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals; and

“Whereas the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals will receive \$4 million less in revenue from the Ministry of Health and other sources; and

“Whereas the Mike Harris funding cuts are causing a crisis in hospital care in Hamilton-Wentworth, with hospitals facing huge deficits, cuts to patient care and bed closings; and

“Whereas Scott Rowand, president of the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals, spoke out recently in the Hamilton Spectator saying, ‘For the first time in my career, I don't know how to fix this problem other than an

awful lot of closures of programs and services needed by the community'; and

"Whereas Mr Rowand went on to say: 'We need more cash in the system and we need it now. And that is cash to deal with the issues that we are dealing with today. Don't ask us to do anything more because the people in the system are at their limit.'

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Harris government stop underfunding Ontario's hospitals to fund tax cuts for the wealthy and act immediately to restore funding to the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals so they can continue providing quality health care services to the people of Hamilton-Wentworth."

I continue to support my local community by adding my name to this petition.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I am pleased to present a petition signed by over 400 residents of the Black Creek Retirement Park in Stevensville, Ontario. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the residents of Black Creek Retirement Park, live in a leisure home community as independent and self-sufficient individuals; and

"Whereas we, the residents of Black Creek Retirement Park, represent a vastly increasing number of Ontarians who reside in leisure home parks; and

"Whereas we currently pay property taxes to the owner of Black Creek Retirement Park, who in turn remits taxation payments to the municipality as one group, without the opportunity for an appeal;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario to enact legislation whereby each resident of Black Creek Retirement Park receive an individual property tax roll number from the province of Ontario and an individual property tax bill from the town of Fort Erie;

"We furthermore petition the Legislature of Ontario to enact legislation that will allow each resident of Black Creek Retirement Park the right to appeal their property tax assessment and bill on an individual basis as they deem appropriate."

In support of my constituents, I affix my signature.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a further petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas we are concerned about the quality of health care in Ontario;

"Whereas we do not believe health care should be for sale;

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is taking steps to allow profit-driven companies to provide health care services in Ontario;

"Whereas we won't stand for profits over people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We do not wish to have our health care system privatized."

I concur with the intent of the petitioners, and I will affix my signature to it.

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to save Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital.

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned citizens of Hamilton and the surrounding communities, beg leave to petition the government of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission has announced the closure of Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Health Services Restructuring Commission, is divesting its responsibility for mental health care without hearing from the community first; and

"Whereas community-based mental health care providers will bear the brunt of this ill-fated decision by being forced to meet what is sure to be an increased demand for their services; and

"Whereas the community pays the price for cuts to mental health care;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Hamilton and area who care about quality, accessible and publicly accountable mental health care for all Ontarians, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately set aside all recommendations to divest and/or close Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital and the programs and services it provides; and

"Further, to call for full hearings to seek community solutions to community issues and to democratically decide the future of mental health care for the citizens of Hamilton and area."

I add my name to these petitioners.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I have been informed in my request for a late show that the minister and the parliamentary assistant won't be available today. I ask unanimous consent that it be put over until Tuesday.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is there unanimous consent that the late show be put off until Tuesday? I didn't hear a no. Agreed.

OPPOSITION DAY

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Madam Speaker, I request unanimous consent to move opposition day motion number 1.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Can I have consent for the member for Fort William to move the motion? Agreed.

Mrs McLeod: I move that whereas the Mike Harris government has successfully and deliberately created a crisis in our children's education;

Whereas the Mike Harris government stated clearly at the beginning of its mandate plans to "create a useful crisis" in education;

Whereas Mike Harris and Dave Johnson have repeatedly poured fuel on the education crisis with expensive ads and calculated attacks on our teachers, trustees and students;

Whereas Mike Harris's Bill 160 and the education funding formula have only added to that crisis;

Whereas Bill 160 amounts to a power grab by the Mike Harris government, removing local input from our children's education;

Whereas Bill 160 imposes conditions on local boards but fails to provide adequate funding allowing many local boards to meet those conditions;

Whereas Bill 160 causes all school board and teacher contracts to expire at the same time;

Whereas the Mike Harris government is forcing schools to close across the province;

Whereas the Mike Harris government has taken at least \$1 billion out of our classrooms;

Whereas for these reasons and others, this government's education policy has been a failure;

Whereas we value our children's education and the dedication of Ontario's teachers;

The Ontario Liberals call on the government to admit that Bill 160 does nothing but create a crisis in education across the province;

That the government immediately initiate an independent, objective review of their funding formula to ensure that each board is given the resources needed to provide quality education to our students.

The Minister of Education and every other member of the Harris government have absolutely refused to accept any responsibility for the exercise of the power they have given to themselves. They wanted to take \$1 billion out of education. They decided they could only do that if they took control over all education funding, so they did. They now control all the dollars, they make all the rules about how those dollars are to be spent, and they made their cuts, but they refuse to accept the responsibility for what is actually happening to students and to classrooms because of their decisions.

The minister says that he isn't shutting down junior kindergarten programs or English-as-a-second-language programs or adult education programs. All he has done is cut the funding so drastically that these programs have to be reduced or lost in their entirety. The minister doesn't limit special education programs; he says he's giving special education \$1 billion a year. The fact that this means a loss of service for many special-needs students simply isn't his concern. And he doesn't close schools; he keeps telling us that school boards will do that, that nothing is different from before. Except this time school

boards aren't looking at closing schools because of declining enrolment; they're being forced to close schools, as many as 600 schools, because this government will not pay to heat, clean or light what they consider to be extra spaces, and there is no flexibility in the funding formula to recognize where the students might be or where they can get an optimal education.

Unfortunately, while the minister refuses to recognize the consequences of his decisions and the impact on the classroom, the impact on those classrooms is only too real indeed.

I want to take my time today — and I know a number of my colleagues are anxious to speak, so I'm not going to go on at length — to paint a picture of what is happening to real students in real classrooms through the words of Margaret Jackson, who is a parent from Kakabeka Falls, Ontario, and who has written the following letter to David Johnson.

"Mr Johnson,

"I would like to draw your attention to the fact that your government's promises are not holding true. You have stated many times that you're putting money back into the classroom and that quality early education is important. Your funding formula has taken money away from the classroom. I challenge you to prove otherwise.

"The performance and welfare of children in the classroom is being affected by reduced funding for busing, reduced lunchtime care, reduced custodial care, increased class size and reduced funding for special education. All these factors are a part of the whole picture called education.

"You have cut custodial care in our schools. The classrooms are cleaned every other day. This affects the children in the classroom who have allergies and asthma. You are creating a health risk for the school community."

At estimates yesterday, one of the members of the government was taking lightly the suggestion that this is creating a health hazard for students in the classroom. This parent is clearly concerned about the lack of maintenance that is being caused by the cut in the maintenance budget. This is a parent whose school is not threatened with closure, at least not imminently, as far as we know, but this is a parent who is seeing the result of what will happen to the maintenance of our schools if boards do not close the schools that they are being forced to close because this government has withdrawn the maintenance funding for what they consider to be extra spaces.

1510

This parent goes on to point out to the minister:

"You have provided funds of \$5 per child per year for lunchtime supervision. I've been informed by my board that most children in the city of Thunder Bay stay at school for lunch. In a rural setting" — and Kakabeka Falls is a rural setting — "where my children attend school, all children are bused. Therefore, all children must stay in the classroom for lunch.

"You, Minister, have not provided sufficient funding for a basic service that is a necessity in schools. You have reduced funds for busing. These buses bring children to the classroom.

"In northwestern Ontario most children live in rural settings and must take a bus to school. These bus rides for some are close to two hours each way. Tell me that this doesn't affect their concentration and performance in the classrooms."

Again, this particular parent's school is not imminently threatened with closure.

If you were talking to my colleague Pat Hoy, who listed a school in his area, Romney Central school, the parents will say, "We don't want our children to be on buses even longer because of the crisis in education that this government has created."

This parent goes on to say:

"Minister, you have been very generous in providing funding for all those wonderful, pricey new American textbooks. But you've stopped dead in your tracks and forgotten there's a next step. These books need to be used in the classroom, but won't be used effectively unless there are teaching bodies to use them, manuals for the teachers to learn from and training opportunities provided to the staff so they can acquaint themselves with the new material. They need to develop new methods by which to teach. Providing part of the tools is not enough."

I might add to Mrs Jackson's comments about textbooks that not providing any textbooks at all for the new science and social studies curriculum certainly doesn't enable teachers to teach that highly vaunted new curriculum this fall.

Mrs Jackson goes on to say:

"You've stated that quality early education is very important, yet you don't follow the standards set by the Day Nurseries Act. The Day Nurseries Act for the same ages, three-, four- and five-year-olds, states that the ratio be 1 to 8, with no more than 16 in any group."

"These standards actually provide the base for which young children can receive quality early education. Low ratios provide quality time and learning opportunities for the young child. One teacher to 25-plus provides for little more than crowd control."

"Once again, these are young children in the classroom who are at a very impressionable age and are being traumatized by your ministry's current student ratio."

Mrs Jackson will know that 25 to 1 in a JK class is now the mandated and funded average junior kindergarten class size in Ontario. Many junior kindergarten classes are in fact higher than 25. Where they are lower, it is because boards have made classes from grade 1 and up higher to accommodate the essential lower ratios in a junior kindergarten class. Of course, the class sizes in grades 1 and 2 are going to be considerably larger than they have been before because this government withdrew \$147 million that was used previously to keep class sizes down in grades 1 and 2.

Mrs Jackson goes on to address this. She says:

"Class sizes have been capped as per your instruction. What rationale dictates that JK-SK children can handle a 1 to 25-plus ratio? What rationale dictates that the primary grades can handle a 1 to 25-or-more ratio? These are the very grades that previously received extra funding

so that the number of students were less and the children in the classroom could benefit. The numbers in the lower grades need to be lower so that the children can get more individual attention and therefore get a quality early education."

Mrs Jackson comments on special education funding, which she says has been reduced over the last number of years in her school. She believes that what's happened is that special-needs students are being forced into regular classrooms without support. In fact, she says:

"Our school has close to 60 special-needs or at-risk students with one half-time special education support person. This support is inadequate and woefully not acceptable. The funding you've allocated for the testing of children at risk is not sufficient. Our school has already identified more students to be tested than the budget allows for."

Mrs Jackson goes on to comment about secondary schools. She says:

"Minister, you have through Bill 160 put secondary school teachers in a position to reach burnout quickly. Teaching seven out of eight periods doesn't allow for sufficient planning time, time to mark assignments, time to volunteer for lunchtime activities or after-school sports. Once again, teachers spending time in the classroom is only a part of the picture."

She adds a comment about the value of extracurricular activities which develop leadership qualities, a love for physical activity, which in turn promotes mental stimulation, that they learn to work as a team. These are life skills that cannot readily be taught in the classroom. I won't complete the letter with the very specific comment she has of a political nature to the minister.

I wanted to paint this picture as seen by a parent who is on the front lines with teachers, with students, seeing the reality of what this government's cuts are doing to create a crisis in the classrooms of her children. Her words essentially echo the comments that were made by Justice Cumming, who was commenting on Bill 160 after having received extensive testimony on the consequences of Bill 160 in court and said that the funding formula was put together in haste without considering its impact on education. He said that some boards, just to meet the terms of Bill 160 and live within the government's funding conditions, would either have to negotiate significant reductions in salaries for their personnel or would have to cannibalize their education system.

This government likes to talk about equity, but the funding formula is simply not working in a way which is truly equitable and it certainly is not conducive to providing an equal educational opportunity for every student, because what this government has done is provide funding at the lowest common denominator and that is denying opportunity to many students.

If this government actually wants to deliver what it says it is doing in its \$6.5 million worth of advertising, it should stop now, take a look at what it is actually doing and have an independent review of the funding formula so

that we can determine what is truly fair and equitable funding.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to the Liberal opposition resolution because it of course keeps in front of all of our minds here and across the province the devastation that has been wrought on publicly funded education in this province by the government of the day.

No one should be under any illusions about who created the crisis. No one should have any sense that there is no choice on the part of the government to do what it has done. It has proudly declared that it is almost an article of faith for it to transform the educational system to make it something quite different from what we have built up over many years in this province.

The Mike Harris Tory government has a whole different vision of what education is about. It is not the broad-based educational system that was built up in this province from the time of Ryerson through Bill Davis. It is not the kind of system that is there to develop in students a sense of community, to help students to learn how to be part of their community, where the school system is directly connected to the local community through its governance structures and through its funding structures. It's a whole different ball game now.

Through Bill 160 and through Bill 104, this government has decided to remove the local elements from education, to give the central control of education to the Ministry of Education, to control entirely the purse strings — absolutely no flexibility allowed to local communities to meet their own individual needs — to revise the curriculum to a back-to-basics kind of curriculum focused primarily on preparing children and youth as if they were widgets for the industrial market, rather than to educate them and to make them better citizens.

It is extremely serious when we see a government that has cut what they call frills out of an education system — frills that include the kind of psychological supports that children need, the kind of mentoring supports that children need, the music and art and drama that help children learn self-expression and socialization. They will tell you: "We haven't done any of those things. Local school boards may make those choices." But we all know, and the parents and the students all know, and the teachers and the boards all know, that when you cut the funding into little pieces and force the funding into your priorities the way this government has, the things that this government considers extraneous — things like social studies, we heard the Premier say, things that do not fit their model of job training as a form of education — we know that local school boards are going to have very little choice. That's really what this is all about, is making sure that there is a conformity that enables the system to turn out children to be pawns in the larger picture this government has.

Bill 160, which the Liberal motion talks about, is only one part of this, because there are many other parts of this. Bill 160 deals only with the funding of elementary and secondary schools and it doesn't deal with the underfunding in post-secondary education, it doesn't deal with

the lack of access to post-secondary education under a deregulated system of tuition fees. It doesn't speak to the devastating changes to the apprenticeship program, which we are in the process of discussing here with Bill 55. It doesn't deal with the download of responsibilities to a municipality, on the one hand, in terms of municipal services, but the absolute lack of power left for school board officials as a result of Bill 104.

1520

Lest anybody have any kind of illusion left that these are not deliberate effects, and I can't imagine that anyone has that illusion left after watching the previous Minister of Education explain how a crisis was going to be created and then that was how this government was going to engineer the changes it wanted from its ideological point of view. I can't imagine people are under that illusion, but if perhaps they are, they need to look at Bill 160 and the kinds of concerns that have arisen out of Bill 160 in that context of the broader perspective.

We have a real need to be very clear about the fact that we're at a crossroads. Publicly funded education as we know it in this province is being decimated by these decisions. It is very clear that the kind of interaction between teachers and students and parents and the local boards is being undermined, and I would suggest quite deliberately undermined, by the rhetoric of this government.

This government has consistently attacked teachers, and the disgusting display of the Minister of Education celebrating World Teachers' Day the other day was a spectacle indeed to behold, after there has been attack after attack after attack on teachers and their legitimate bargaining unions.

One of the clear issues that is at stake is, who is going to have the interests of children at heart? Is it going to be people who have trained themselves, who have chosen to teach, who in many cases have worked within the educational system for a long time, who have committed themselves and recommitted themselves day after day to the task of teaching students, or is it going to be government members, many of whom have expressed nothing but contempt for education, nothing but contempt for the kinds of policies that have made our system one of the best in the world?

What we have is a situation where so much has been done so quickly to move us in the wrong direction, in exactly the wrong direction, that sometimes people are blinded to the reality of what's going on, and that's a very serious matter.

It is my belief that at stake here very clearly is the whole notion of publicly funded education, a public education system that is the system that's available to all those in the province who seek an education, to all those in the province who are of age to be entitled to education. We, of course, believe that all Ontarians ought to be entitled to education, and one of the most offensive things about the government's actions has been its steady attack on the educational opportunities for adults who are seeking the kind of training that will make them better able to feed themselves and their families.

When we talk about public education we often think about children from age 4 through age 19, but we have to be very clear that we have a large number of people in this province who still require the basic education sometimes of elementary school and sometimes of secondary school. Yet what has this government done? It has withdrawn the kind of funding that would enable that education to take place in the most effective way. By treating all adult education as though it's continuing education, as though it's something that people do on the side, it's not something that people dedicate themselves to on a full-time basis, has the effect of making it extremely difficult for marginalized people to participate and extremely difficult for boards of education to explain an emphasis on adult education in an appropriate way. It is a tragedy that we see the opportunities that had been built up over a number of years for daytime all-adult schools being destroyed by this government's policy, and it is another part of this kind of destructive force that is going on.

There's no reason to assume that this government's belief in privatization is not at the root of many of these attacks. We have seen the kind of belief expressed in many ways that privately offered and delivered services, this government says, are always going to be more effective and efficient than those delivered in the public sphere. They have taken that tack by privatizing, by contracting out in their own government ministry. They have taken that tack in terms of the so-called market basis for the long-term health care system, where competition, not competence, not care of patients, is at the base.

It is quite clear, because we hear the echoes in their voices every day, that they have bought into the Fraser Institute vision of privatized education. This is an ideology that this government has, that people ought to be able to pay for the services that they have, and they ought to be able to pay for them in a direct way. We heard that kind of ideology expressed by David Frum only recently about health care. We see it in the Fraser Institute's reports on privatized education. We see it in the demand for vouchered schools. We see it in the demand for all sorts of private schools for equity funding with the publicly funded education system. Many would say: "What's wrong with that? It's all education." What's wrong with it is that once we get that private pay system in place, what we do is skew the availability to those who have no ability to pay, exactly as we do in the health care system.

While we certainly would agree with many of the concerns that are raised in the Liberal opposition day motion, one of the things we find missing from here is that whole focus of what is really at the base of the changes that this government has made in education.

This government has a belief that those who have dollars have dollars because they're smarter and they work harder and they deserve all of the best things, and the people who don't have money are, by contrast, necessarily lazy, less able, less worthy, less deserving of the best things in life. As soon as you begin to privatize education, and I would suggest health care, as this government's vision clearly shows them moving towards, then what we do is make the almighty dollar the only thing

that matters. Those that have dollars can purchase the education they choose for their children; those who don't have dollars do not have that capacity, and a truncated publicly funded system will go the way of publicly funded education in many of the states in the United States.

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As a direct result of federal and state underfunding in the United States, the public education system in many parts of that country is unable to deliver the quality kind of education that is going to bring those who are less fortunate up to the threshold so that they can actually enter into opportunities in the rest of the community.

I don't have that vision for Ontario. I don't think most people in Ontario have that vision. I think most people in Ontario know that one of the reasons we are known as one of the best places in the world to live is because we have developed a good, publicly funded education system that cares about the success of every child — not just children whose parents have deep pockets but every child.

What is happening with the education system is a de-equalization of opportunity in education that is concerted and that is having an effect already. When you go to speak to young people in junior and senior high school about what they expect to see in the future, invariably in working-class neighbourhoods, in neighbourhoods where parents do not have a lot of savings, do not have a lot of income, you hear young people saying: "I always thought I'd go to college" or "I always thought I'd go to university, but I don't think I can afford to do it now. I can't afford to start my adult life with a debt burden of \$25,000 to \$30,000." They're overtly saying that they don't believe that opportunity is going to be there for them.

If it isn't, we know that their chances of employment are very little. We know very much that as our economy changes, as the skill-knowledge matrix changes, the chance of well-paid employment if you do not have post-secondary education drops dramatically.

What we see happening in this whole context of all the changes in education is the reality that a whole lot of young people in Ontario today, people the age of the pages we have here in the Legislature, are suddenly facing very different opportunities than they would have faced had the system been a more open system, had the system encouraged that participation.

Only part of that is Bill 160, but Bill 160, because of the rigidity of the government's decisions to top-down decide what is valuable and what is not, has the potential of disenfranchising, disadvantaging lots of young people. There are lots of young people whose road to learning is not through what this government thinks is important. It's not through the nuts and bolts that are going to turn them into the widgets that this government thinks they should be, but it is through a lot of the peripheral support that they have been able to have in school that they will likely not be able to have given the constraints that school boards are going to have.

We know the stories of hundreds of young people who through music, art and drama, for example, through after-

school activities, have suddenly found their feet, have suddenly taken fire, have suddenly had a capacity to learn that didn't appear to be there before because we couldn't access their particular kind of learning.

When you put the kind of emphasis that this government is putting on its curriculum to prepare people for the jobs that industry says today they want them for, we're limiting them for possibilities in the future. They need to be very flexible. They don't need to be hammered into square holes to meet the needs of an employer today which are likely to change tomorrow, and that is the great fear that people have when we see the education system being controlled top-down from people who do not know what the community is like in which people live, do not know what the aspirations of that community might be and who do not know what the real opportunities are within the community for those young people.

Yesterday we got a sense that the kinds of learning that make us a civic society, that help us to live together in the multicultural, multiracial society we have somehow are not as important.

Those are the kinds of issues that people are fearful about, people who've had experience with the Ministry of Education. One of the reasons there was this duplication around curriculum was that when the curriculum came down from on high, it very often did not mean much to the people living in a community. It needed to be rewritten to meet the needs of those communities, and we quite clearly see that's not something that this government thinks is important, because there's no provision for teachers within a particular community to fashion a curriculum that's going to meet the needs of those students. That is not to say that those students wouldn't be learning the basics. They would be learning the basics, but they would be learning them in a way that enabled them to understand.

I must say that added to the whole dollar issue which the Liberal motion clearly puts an emphasis on, this whole philosophical, ideological context is equally as serious as the context about the dollar being the bottom line.

As the last point, I would say that what I find missing here in the resolution is very much of an idea of how the Liberals think this whole problem should be solved. I personally think that when you criticize what is going on, you need to be very clear about what you would do differently. You need to be very clear about what it is. Is the Liberal motion saying that they would restore the dollars to the education system? I don't seem to see that here. One of the real concerns we have is — the faults they have found in the system we agree with. We agree that all of these and many more dangers exist in this bill. But we don't see anything coming forward from the Liberals that suggests that they're going to reinvest in education, and if they are going to reinvest in education, where they're going to get the resources to do that.

That is a clear difference between us. While we agree on the dangers, we as New Democrats believe, first of all, that there must be a reinvestment, that it must be done in such a way that it very clearly puts focus on the things that have gotten lost in the system along the way. Yes, there

needs to be an independent objective review of the funding formula, because there are many communities where that funding formula, that cookie-cutter approach, is being very destructive and other communities where the cookie-cutter approach is giving them an advantage over neighbouring boards. So an objective overview of the funding formula needs to be done.

But where are the dollars going to come from? We as New Democrats say very clearly that we know where some of those dollars will come from. Some of those dollars will come from our determination that the top 6% of earners will have the opportunity, as the government says, to reinvest in education because many of the top earners have already benefited from the education system and will continue to benefit from the added prestige and power they get by virtue of their income.

We also clearly say that much more may be necessary. We need to find some way to build into this whole system that's been set up the flexibility to reflect some of the local diversity in our province. Education does not occur in a vacuum; it occurs in a community. It is important that education speak to that community. In many of our communities, there are many parents who do not have education as a top value for themselves, and one of the tasks of education is to ensure that they have confidence that what children learn in school, what their young people learn, is going to actually be to the life they are going to lead. There is no such confidence, given that this curriculum is going to come down from on high, from the ivory tower of the Mowat Block, and be imposed on each community as if that community were exactly the same as the one next door.

1540

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): We've heard the doom and the gloom in education. We've heard the doom-and-gloom critics from the Liberals and the NDP, who see nothing but worry and concern and bleakness in our education system. I'm here to tell you that I have a completely different vision from the doom and gloom that we've heard from the opposition ranks.

We in the governing party, the Progressive Conservatives, have a very optimistic and bright vision of education in the future, one that stresses equal opportunity for all students, one that stresses excellence and quality in the public education system, a system that parents are happy to send their child into.

Unfortunately, over the past number of years, some parents have taken their children out of the public education system because they were concerned. But we have turned that corner now and we are reinstating quality —

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Member for Fort York, come to order.

Hon David Johnson: — into the education system, discipline into the education system. I see nothing but a bright future. As the investment dealers say, I am bullish on education in the province of Ontario.

There are a couple of aspects that I could comment on, though. In our vision of education, teachers are an integral, central, core component of the education system in the province, excellent teachers. We do have excellent teachers in the system and we count on those excellent teachers —

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): Yes, those ads really demonstrate that.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Oakwood, come to order.

Hon David Johnson: — to contribute and to keep education on track in the future. I find it somewhat puzzling that the Liberal Party would only as an afterthought, the very last “whereas” clause, make scant reference to the dedication of Ontario’s teachers. They worry about the funding, they worry about the dollars, they worry about everything else, but barely mention teachers in their proposal. I want to tell you that we put teachers up front.

I also say that the motion before us references repeatedly pouring fuel on the education crisis. Unfortunately, this has happened. We did have an illegal strike last year. There were at least two members of this Legislature who walked that picket line, who inflamed, who fanned the flames during that illegal picket time. One of them was the leader of the official opposition, Mr Dalton McGuinty. He was out there proudly fanning the flames, pouring fuel on the fire.

When I mentioned this the other night, the NDP said, “Don’t forget about our leader.” They said, “Our leader was there too. Our leader,” they said, “was also throwing fuel on the fire at the same time that the Liberal leader was.” The two of them were there.

Mrs Boyd: And individual members too; not just the leaders.

Hon David Johnson: Now the NDP are telling me it wasn’t just the leaders; there were more of their members there. That’s why I said there were at least two members of this House. The leader of the official opposition not only walked the picket line, adding fuel to the fire, but spoke at the rallies and encouraged the fact that the schools were being closed to our students, encouraged this situation. I say shame on the leader of the official opposition for being a part of that, for throwing that fuel on the fire, and shame to the members of the third party, although we expect it from the third party. That’s their bit, so I guess to some degree we can excuse them.

The agenda that we have for education is one of quality. In the very few minutes that I have, I want to reiterate some of the key components of the quality in education which we are restoring in the province of Ontario, a quality that parents have said needs to be restored. Parents have been pleading for this quality to be restored to education. We have listened to those parents.

I would like to start with the new curriculum at the elementary level. We know that over a course of years, prior to last year, the curriculum had been sliding, that the rigour was no longer in the curriculum, either at the elementary or the secondary level, that there were no

expectations, so parents didn’t know at the end of each grade level what their students should have been taught or what the students should have learned.

I’m proud to say that beginning over a year ago, last fall, we did, through the new mathematics curriculum and the new language curriculum, begin the process of revival of the curriculum. These two were introduced a year ago.

The remainder of the new curriculum was introduced just this past month, in September, a curriculum that at the science and technology level, for example, involved the first new technology curriculum in over 30 years, the first kindergarten program since 1944. We did it over the opposition, you might say, of the opposite ranks. But we held true in our belief that the curriculum needed to be upgraded, needed to have annual year-by-year expectations so that the parents, the teachers and the students themselves would know at the end of each year, whether it’s an arts curriculum or physical ed and health, what they should be taught, what they should have learned.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): What about English?

Hon David Johnson: Language as well; each and every course. The curriculum is more challenging. It has been applauded, and it has been introduced at the elementary level.

It’s now being developed for the secondary level. The new secondary school curriculum will begin next fall, in the year 1999, and it will work hand in glove with the elementary curriculum and introduce that rigour back into the secondary schools which we have introduced into the elementary schools.

What is the next natural step, once the curriculum has been introduced? The natural next step is to test against that curriculum. I’m pleased to say here’s the *Cobourg Daily Star* indicating that the province is to test grade 6 students. This is just one newspaper that is carrying the message that next year not only will we be testing grade 3 students right across the province of Ontario, but grade 6 students as well.

This testing program, along with the new curriculum, is being developed with the assistance of teachers. We have involved teachers in all aspects of the reform. Teachers developed the new curriculum; teachers have developed the testing. Not only have they developed the testing, but obviously they’re involved in marking the results of the testing. They’re doing so very enthusiastically, I might say, because as I recounted to this House recently, I was fortunate to drop in one day when they were marking the grade 3 test results, and the teachers were extremely enthusiastic. We had three times more volunteers to be involved in that testing process than actually could be accommodated. These are the elementary teachers.

The testing is going to be helpful to the individual students, the testing is going to be helpful to schools so the schools know how they stand and the testing is going to be helpful to school boards so they know how to allocate their resources and if there are specific areas, specific schools that need a greater allocation of resources to assist

the students there. The testing, I think, is a wonderful new addition.

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Next comes a new report card, again developed with the assistance of teachers. Report cards are important not only to the students but to the parents, and the teachers are glad to see report cards that are understandable as well. We have a report card that finally parents can understand. I know all the members of this House have talked to parents over the years who have said: "We cannot understand these old report cards. We do not know where our students stand. Please give us a report card so we know how our children are faring in the education system." With the assistance of teachers, that has been developed. It will be out all across Ontario before Christmas in all the elementary schools. I'm really proud of that.

What comes next? How about textbooks? As the Port Hope Evening Guide says, "Schools Get New Textbooks." Finally.

Interjection.

Hon David Johnson: Exactly right, those old dog-eared books. Some schools in the past would say, "We'd be delighted to have dog-eared books," because they didn't even have dog-eared books. Where was all the textbook money going?

Mr Marchese: Teachers had a couple of days. How many days did they have to choose those books?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Fort York, will you come to order.

Hon David Johnson: It was perhaps going into administration or bureaucracy. Unfortunately, not enough of it was going into textbooks where it should have gone. So we've done two things there.

Mr Marchese: You're the best, Dave.

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat for a moment. Member for Fort York, this is not a dialogue between you and the Minister of Education. You'll get your chance, I'm sure, in a few minutes. Please come to order. Minister of Education.

Hon David Johnson: I'm always delighted to have the input from the member for Fort York. He's always helpful.

I will say that the two things we've done with regard to the textbooks are, number one, by protecting classroom spending in the new funding formula we have ensured that more funds will go into textbooks through the school boards' annual purchasing program. Those funds are protected, they must be spent in the classroom, and the students will get more textbooks. But this year we felt that to start this new process I'm so optimistic about we would double the amount of money going into the elementary textbook system. The province of Ontario organized the purchasing process. Over 3.2 million books —

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): That's a lot of books.

Hon David Johnson: That's a lot of books — have found their way into our elementary classrooms across Ontario. It's overdue. And I can tell you that we're only about halfway there. Because of the \$100-million total allotment, because of the excellent value we've received

for this mass purchase, there remains \$45 million yet to purchase more books, science equipment and computer software in the classrooms, all of these resources to help our students. Over the course of the next several months, we will be working, and have been working, with teachers across Ontario to determine the science equipment they need, the computer software they need, and you'll see more of those resources flowing into the classroom.

I mentioned the new funding formula a couple of times. It's the key aspect here that allocates fairly. The member for London Centre says we need to look at each individual student, and I agree with her 100%, and each individual school and we need to ensure a fairness. Unfortunately, I'm sure the member for London Centre would agree with me that the funding has not been fair in the past, has not been allocated fairly to each student, to each school, to each board. Boards have had vastly differing amounts of resources to spend on those individual schools and those individual students.

Now that has come to an end. Now we say that each child is valued equally in Ontario through the funding formula. Each child receives the same amount of resources to assist in his or her education, whether that child is in a rural area or an urban area, whatever system that child is in. That's a key element and an element we believe in very firmly.

Finally, and I guess my time is just about up, I would say that the other aspects, such as the cap on class sizes, are most important. As I've indicated to this House, between 1991 and 1997, for example, every year, unfortunately the average size of classes across Ontario has increased; each and every year in the elementary system more children on average in every class. We've said that has got to stop and we've put a stop to it. We've put a cap on average class sizes. That will lead to quality.

All of these measures are leading to improved quality, more instructional time for our students so that our students will now have the same number of instructional days as students from other provinces such as British Columbia and Alberta. Formerly they had fewer instructional days. These are adding quality to our education system.

My time has run out, but I will say that with these added improvements, these added quality initiatives, I think this House should be bullish on our education system and should look forward to a bright future for our education system in Ontario.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I'm sure for the public of Ontario, for anyone who has watched the debate, they think there have been enough things related to bulls in this House to last for some time.

Minister, when there is a book written, one that covers the history of Ontario accurately, one that hasn't been thrown together to meet your political deadline on trying to push money out the door, it will have some regard for you as minister. What it will talk about is that instead of an education minister, we had a flim-flam man trying to sell us the equivalent of snake oil by trying to show us that somehow the education system which he's wrecking over

here is being improved by a few little window dressings over there. "Drink some of this elixir and everything will be fine," says Dave Johnson.

That elixir contains some pretty sad ingredients. It contains a rushed and almost wrecked book-buying program. It contains an attack on teachers which began with your predecessor, who sits in the House, continued and perpetuated by yourself, and it continues to this day.

I don't know how you didn't choke on the words when you tried to criticize the Liberals for not putting teachers first. The problem is, you've put teachers first — right in your sights, right in your agenda of pulling things down, of attacking and denigrating. You've had nothing sincere to say about the well-being and the practice of teaching in this province. Instead what you've created, precisely and clearly, are the obverse conditions. Working with your predecessor, you've been able to make sure that teachers can't do the job they want to do, the job they signed on to do, the job they've committed to do in this province.

It's very instructive to the people watching this debate that you refrain from defending the very things this debate is about in terms of what you're actually doing to the education system, and that includes closing schools, because that's substantially what you're accomplishing with your bill in the first place and everything that you've followed through on with your amendments on class size and so on. You're still following through on the closing of hundreds of schools in this province. That will be your legacy. Nothing will fool the parents around this province when they see, as they will in my riding, five and probably 10 schools shut down simply because of the clumsiness and lack of commitment on the part of your government.

Similarly, you refrain from talking about what you're actually doing in terms of teachers. You're firing them. You're letting teachers go. You had the gall to stand in this House last week, fortunately caught out by our education critic, Lyn McLeod, and try and pretend otherwise. Your own figures show that there are 8,000 or 9,500 who have taken up retirement. You talk about hiring new teachers. The net effect is 3,500 fewer people instructing our children at the same time that there are 5,000 more children. That is the kind of flim-flam that only a Minister of Education less concerned with children, less concerned with parents, less concerned with creating an effective citizenship in this province, could try and get away with.

What he hasn't reckoned with is that there are deeper roots than that. This isn't the kind of thing to be dealt with with the superficial tricks this minister is trying to purvey to the public. Instead, the public has an abiding respect for teachers doing their jobs. That's the kind of thing this minister hasn't counted on, that these things will be found out, just like some students are finding out now that some of those textbooks that were ordered are erasable. They were printed so badly and in such a rush that they're not even going to hold up. But that doesn't matter to this minister because what he's interested in is that they lasted for the photo op, that they last long enough to be propaganda, he hopes, for next year's election.

What people really want is some certainty, some stability and some security in the classroom. What they don't want are members —

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Etobicoke-Humber, come to order.

1600

Mr Kennedy: This is, of course, bigger than the Minister of Health. We heard from the member for Scarborough East and the present member for Etobicoke; and from each of them, not a peep on behalf of students, not one thing is said on behalf of students to protect them from the impact of this.

Let's look at the core of this. This is the part that makes the government members so irate, because they know in each and every school in their riding this is being played out right now — not more teaching time for students but rather 25%, 30% more students per teacher. They know the parents in their ridings are going to find the attention that their kids get fragmented by their minister and by their government.

They're giving them four periods to teach, for example, in the separate school system. I cited the other day the case of a music teacher, a biology teacher, a high-level English teacher. They're not talking about 25 more minutes a day. You're talking about an extra period, 75 minutes, and you're taking away the time they have to mark tests, to pay attention to those students, to do the extra things that they need to do. And they're not extra things; they're part and parcel things.

In this House, we might sit some 20% of the time of a normal week. If we were to listen to the members opposite, if we were to take them seriously, if they had the courage to stand up and say, "This is what we want to do: We want to diminish the effectiveness of our teaching profession, we actually want to deduct from them some of the time they have to do a good job," if they had the courage, if this minister, instead of trying to sell his trinkets out there in what he thinks is some frontier, that people won't be fully paying attention, told us that's what he wanted to do, at least the debate could begin.

You won't hear one member, not one member on the government side, stand up and acknowledge what they're actually trying to accomplish: to have more students per teacher; to divide and fragment and pull apart their ability to provide a learning experience for each of those students.

It begets the question: Why would they do that? This is a group of individuals that we have in government today, led by their flim-flam minister, who will not hunker down on what the real fundamentals of education in this province are: a learning environment that has teachers inspired to do their job, that sees the government as a referee between them and the boards, not someone who meddles and makes mischief and delves into things that aren't necessarily the purview of government at all. It's only done because this minister wants to have that effect in terms of teachers, wants to reduce their ability to

function, because it's one of the ways this minister will hope to discredit public education.

This minister and those members opposite haven't invented a crisis for nothing; they've done this for a purpose. They've done this so that if they can slide past the next election, if they can fool enough people about what they're doing currently, they'll bring us an even more fragmented and probably not even public system, a charter system, a voucher system, something based on some of the philosophical beliefs that unfortunately none of the members opposite have the courage to put out there in the open where they can be debated, so we can see what the public values are for some of the nonsense that's going on when they take money out of the schools, when they discourage teachers, when they slam the school administration, when they attack the boards and then say, as this minister did just a few minutes ago, "We're going to give you better quality." Nobody is buying that flim-flam except for the Tory backbench. Somehow they think they and their little junior flim-flammers are going to be able to go around the province and sell little vials of this stuff in their own ridings.

If they had the courage to take their phone calls, meet with some of the parents, meet with some of the teachers, debate with some of the opposition members they've been running away from, they'd be able to find out just how poor the ingredients of this education flim-flam really are.

There is no manner in which the children of our province are going to be well served by the latest manoeuvres of this government. We are compromising our ability to be able to provide a proper learning environment. This government talks about equality, and it talks about equality in the only way that a Reform-Tory government can reckon it, and that is to bring people down to a certain level, to pull down people who are aspiring to do their best. So, rather than setting a standard in terms of what actually needs to be accomplished for each of the children and funding that, they're letting the funding, an average for the province — for example, for maintenance — drive what actually is going to be there for those kids.

Schools in my riding are going to be less safe, the playgrounds will contain more broken glass, their hallways will be dirtier and there won't be as many support services to make those schools function as a direct result of the things this minister, this Premier and this backbench are permitting to happen in this province. They've used, for example, an average amount of money that it costs to be able to provide maintenance and not had respect for the extra costs that exist in some of the larger centres. There is no choice in that connection that they've provided to the school boards, not one iota of local community decision-making to say: "This is what we need to do to keep our children safe. This is what we need to do to deal with the requirements of our community."

This funny, quirky, Reform-Tory party doesn't believe in community. It has forgotten all about it. You know that, the public of Ontario, because you're the ones who have been on the receiving end of this Tory government walking into your town and telling you which hospitals are

going to shut down. You're on the receiving end of this Tory government now when it tells your board, "No, you can't have money to keep those schools open," even when they play a role in your community, even when they're important for special education, even when they're the sites for adult education, which this government has sentenced to extinction. This regressive government doesn't recognize that people don't need just their first chance but their second and third chances at getting the education they require if they're going to succeed in this world. Instead, there's no allotment for that, none whatsoever, showing a detachment on the part of this government from the basic values this province was founded on.

Sadly for the members opposite — I mean, we hate to be of any aid and assistance to them — they have yet to reckon with the fact that the public out there is not going to be fooled, that Dave Johnson is selling us flim-flam, that he doesn't reckon on the public having a much better instinct about this than he has so far taken a notion of. I think it only behooves the backbench today to start to show us some of the fibre, some of the timber that brought them into politics in the first place. Let's see one of the backbench actually talk to us about the flaws in this bill, the flaws in Bill 160, the flaws in the makeup legislation, the actual trouble and turmoil they've inflicted on the education system. Let's see one honest Tory today.

Mr Marchese: I'm happy to have this opportunity to speak to this motion. I really don't disagree with much of what is contained in this motion, obviously, so I'll speak generally to what this Conservative government has done to the education system and refer myself to the comments of the minister, because he's a smooth kind of guy.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): A nice guy.

Mr Marchese: I'm not sure about nice, but he is smooth. There are a lot of people out there watching who think he's a very sincere kind of guy who means what he says.

Mr Colle: Slick.

Mr Marchese: Slick, it's true, but he is smooth. You must admit, he does a good job.

He talks about equal opportunity, he talks about excellence, he talks about quality, he talks about parents being happy, he talks about turning the corner. In fact, he said a lot of people were going to the private system before, and now, through the policies of this government, they're able to turn the corner and bring people back to the system. This man can in fact say, with the appearance of sincerity, the opposite of what is happening out there, but he will have us believe that what he's saying, of course, is the truth. It's remarkable. That's why I speak to his wonderful talents as a man who is very smooth, and he does it very well. He's one of the best we've got in the front benches. Trust me, I say that with sincerity.

But he talks about things such as report cards. Who can disagree with report cards? New Democrats talked about that, introduced that, in fact, before we left this place. Did we disagree with a better report card system? No one will

disagree, obviously. He speaks about curriculum changes, about putting more science and technology into the curriculum. He doesn't speak about how, in putting more science courses into the curriculum, you are displacing other courses such as English, which I would say is needed by a whole lot of you on the other side. If you folks are an example of what we learn through the English curriculum, I tell you, we need more, not less. Maybe science is what we need, because it leans to the proclivities of this minister, who happens to have studied mathematics. Perhaps those leanings are clearly being manifested, but I tell you there's a whole need for more English in the curriculum. The minister could certainly benefit and many of you would benefit from that, I argue.

1610

You've got to put the context of the anger of people out there, teachers and others, by speaking about Bill 104 and Bill 160. But the minister, if you listen to him, never talks about Bill 104, never talks about Bill 160. He is always on the periphery, talking about other topics that he believes people will listen to. That's why he speaks about report cards. That's why he speaks about testing students, his latest kick, and textbooks.

It was interesting, on the issue of textbooks I read two letters to the editor just yesterday, teachers saying, "It is amazing to me how this government can, in the space of a short time, say to teachers 'You've got a couple of weeks' — I'm not even sure they had a couple of weeks — 'to buy these books.'" Otherwise if they didn't make it by the deadline they would have no books. Some of these poor teachers had to rush out without any sense of guidelines as to what they might buy, but they had to rush out in a short period of time and buy books so they could say to the minister, "Yes, we bought books."

It is in my view quite an amazing thing that governments are engaged in when, without any sense of thought — this government doesn't think, it acts. They're proud of acting. You should be proud of thinking, but there is no corresponding thought that follows your actions. All of you, as with the eminence, the Premier, love to speak about action, but most human beings will tell you it's nice to think before you do that. This is a government that does not respect thought. It likes to have people believe they are real men who know how to act and act decisively. Our problem is —

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere): Your problem is you want to control it.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Marchese: Our problem is that we think you should think. The former Minister of Culture says my problem is that we like to control things. I refer the public to Bill 160, which contradicts the comments made by the former Minister of Culture and says that this is the government that, in the history of governments in this province that I'm aware of, has centralized power unlike any other. Bill 160 does just that. It takes control away from local boards.

Bill 104 did that by making sure the trustees have no more power. Their remuneration is so small that I'm not

sure why people run any more. Trustees are no longer accountable, can't go to meetings because where in the past they might have had one family of schools, they now have four families of schools. If in one family of schools there might have been six to eight, and you multiply that by three other families of schools, you've got 24 schools. Trustees can't make it to the meetings any longer to tell them about what's happening with your policies. They can't do it.

They also are not there full-time any longer to be able to assist parents who might have a problem with the system or, for that matter, a teacher. We have effectively destroyed advocacy for parents, for whom the trustee was the mediator. They've destroyed all of that. This government doesn't like advocacy. It wants to destroy it, under the guise of saying parents have more power than ever before.

Then there is Bill 160, the most centralizing bill that I have ever seen. They now effectively control education and education finance and major decisions through that bill. But you won't have M. Johnson, the Minister of Education, saying that. In fact, he'll tell you that he doesn't understand why teachers are so upset. What could he have done that could rile teachers so? He cannot discern the problem. That's the word he used the other day, he cannot "discern" it. Yet the problem is so palpable that why this man can't discern it is beyond understanding.

Bill 160 is the palpable reason why teachers dislike this minister and dislike this Premier and dislike these government members.

Laughter.

Mr Marchese: But Mr Ford laughs. I hope he survives the nomination meeting against the Speaker, because we love him here. He's a good man. He chuckles well in the House. We need him to come back. He understands Bill 160 very well. That's why he's here chuckling at my remarks. I appreciate it.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Get real.

Mr Marchese: Don't you think we need him?

Mr Gerretsen: We need him in the nomination fight, yes.

Mr Marchese: It'll be an interesting fight.

Bill 160 takes all the control away from boards of education. No longer do trustees make decisions on local curriculum to reflect the needs of that local board. They have no such power any longer. Why? Because under the wisdom of this new Russian, centralized kind of government they know what's better for the majority of the public. They say: "We know better. We don't need to give local boards any opportunity to reflect their communities because we do it well."

This is about money. That's what it's all about. It's about mathematics over humanity. They take money out of the educational system and then they say it's about quality. They whack teachers on a daily basis and then they say, "We like teachers." In fact, Mr Johnson, the Minister of Education, accused the Liberals of not mentioning teachers at all in their resolution, whereas this

minister loves teachers. It is true they have been fighting for a while, but he loves them, to be fair.

We've got a serious problem on our hands. It's about taking money out of the education system. Boards of education used to spend about \$2.5 billion out of local money. That \$2.5 billion did not figure at all into your figures because the province has no responsibility for them because they do not pay for any of those programs.

Ms Mushinski: It didn't figure in the classroom either.

Mr Marchese: Oh, I'll get to that if I can, if I have time. There's so little time. You people have cut the time allowed for us to speak to such little length that we have no more time to speak to bills.

The \$2.5 billion that used to go into local programming: The former minister of culture says, "It didn't go into the classroom." Having been a trustee and a former teacher, I can tell her she's wrong, because if she knew she wouldn't say it. As a former trustee with the Toronto board, I can tell you a whole lot of money went into programming, but these people have redefined learning and redefined classroom, so under their definition it didn't go into the classroom. That \$2.5 billion will disappear because it's not in the books provincially.

People are being fired left and right. That \$2.5 billion is disappearing from places like Toronto, places like Ottawa, places like Hamilton. It's disappearing, and those dollars were used to address issues connected to local needs. The Metro board is a reception centre for a great many immigrant students. We used a lot of money for that purpose. It's a reception centre for a lot of people who are refugees. We used a lot of money to assist people with those needs. It is a city that has a great deal of poverty, I might add. We as a board used money to assist students as a way of equalizing the conditions we get students from. We used money to assist parents — and there are a lot of single parents in Toronto, Speaker; you know that. A lot of money went to assist issues in terms of kids who come from some troubled backgrounds, recognizing that there are problems and that we need to provide extra resources to assist those students and those teachers in those boards.

They've taken all that away, yet you have the minister saying here that parents are happy, he's happy, Tories are happy. Someone is happy out there, and we are doom and gloom.

1620

On the face of what I've been saying, we've got a problem. The minister says he is bullish about this. He's using a market term. To also use a marketplace term, I would say we need a correction in this place, a political correction in the system. That's why we're hoping these people are going to go. Just like the market systems are correcting themselves, I believe there a political correction will happen in the next election. The markets are bearish, not bullish. I think he might have misused that term. As a mathematical person I suspect he would know. Maybe he didn't understand it, or maybe he does. We've got a serious problem on our hands.

I don't want to talk about the global economic problem that we have, but these Tories are connected to a larger scheme of things that is bringing it down. These guys have

been so lucky in the last three years. God bless them. With the good fortunes of a good economy they can say, "We turned it all around," and they can say, "We've got billions coming into the economy." They did nothing. That money would have come to any government. But I've got to tell you, in the next six months we are going to see some serious problems.

I hate to be the bearer of bad news. So many in the Globe, Financial Post and Star are people who are informing us about this bad news. The multilateral agreements on investments are in trouble. People are demanding controls on capital finance. They're demanding that governments protect themselves from this fluidity of capital that moves by the trillions of dollars every day, causing chaos in every country around the world. It's correcting itself.

I am proud of this movement that's happening, proud of people like the Council of Canadians and Maude Barlow, who have been fighting the Liberals federally and Mulroney before that and Tories here provincially. We are so lucky to have a few dedicated citizens who are willing to put their lives on the line, to put time and dedication into the causes they believe in. They've fought them too on the issue of education because they know that this is not about quality. They know that; we know that. Parents in our systems know that, in spite of what Mr Johnson, the Minister of Education, has to say.

They talk about instruction time. Bud Wildman, the member for Algoma, and our leader talked about the fact that they do not in that definition of instructional time include guidance teachers or library teachers, because, as the former Minister of Culture would say, that's not instructional time, I assume, because if librarians are not teaching a class, it's not teaching. Would you not say that, former Minister of Culture? And guidance teachers, if they are not actually teaching something, don't really have any value because they're not teaching.

Everybody surely would know — even Tories would know — that guidance is an important part of the school system. I think they would know that. They've gone through the system and they should know or ought to know that a whole lot of students get a lot of support from guidance teachers as a way of guiding them through life, as a way of showing students what their options might be for future prospects, future work. To not count them in into the instruction time we think is stupid, but for this government it's not instructional time.

Libraries: Not part of instructional time, yet everyone I know values librarians and libraries as an important part of our educational system. But these people don't think it counts. In fact, they don't count social workers as part of instruction. I was a trustee for eight years full-time after I quit teaching and I know that social workers played an important role in the system, to assist students who have a lot of problems, who come to the educational system with a lot of problems. I don't know that you could deny that. Social workers, of course, assist teachers in that learning process. It's part of the system.

Secretaries don't count. Vice-principals don't count. School relations workers, who were a bridge to teachers and to parents, are not part of the educational system.

Literacy programs, which I see as an important part of an educational continuum, in the minds of Tories don't count.

So much of what we value, in the minds of these mathematical people, doesn't count. That's why I argue that in their mathematical formula there is no humanity. These people can redefine anything they want in the way they want, but what we lose in the process is humanity.

They have been at war with teachers for a long time. No one can deny it. The public certainly is aware of it and teachers are aware of it and many parents devoted to the educational system can't deny it. Parents who support teachers will not deny it.

This government has done nothing in terms of what an effective school is all about, and I'll speak to that in a second. Effective schools involve some key research components that I have read about for a long time. One of the key components for effective schools, to raise the academic level of all students, is principals who are leaders. With what they've done to principals, I think they have demoralized those folks pretty well, and demoralized principals don't work as effectively as they can. They've done a good job of demoralizing principals. They are leaders. When you have effective leaders as principals, the entire school benefits from that. What have they done to assist principals in making them more effective? They have done nothing.

What have they done to involve parents in the educational system? That is key to educational improvement in our systems. They have done nothing. They just say parents are happy.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: No, no, but I'm going to explain why you have done nothing.

Parents need to be actively involved. How do you involve them? How do you involve parents? It is a difficult task. It needs money. School-community relations are an important tool to connect them to parents. You need active parents and teachers who are happy teachers to be able to get parents involved. It is difficult to get a whole lot of working-class parents to come to the educational system because they believe it's the job of the teacher to teach. We know that when parents are involved, however modestly, there is an incredible improvement in learning. If they're not involved, many of those students will be kept down academically. There is a body of research in this regard.

If you hear those people here on that side, they say, "Oh, but we are giving parents more power." If you just put a couple of parents who are quite willing to give a little more extra time, it doesn't mean the whole parent body is going to be involved. It gives them no power whatsoever. Besides that, parents don't want the power to run a school system. That's why trustees were there. You cannot supplant the role of trustees with parents, because parents say: "We've got a job to do. We don't have the time to be trustees." So what did this government do to get parents involved? Absolutely nothing.

What have they done with the other key component? That was two of them. The other key component is teacher involvement, and whether or not teachers are happy in the educational system determines how well they perform in that classroom. When teachers are happy with their learning environment and the teaching environment, when they get support from governments, when they get support from boards of education, superintendents and principals, they perform better. When teachers perform better, you have a better educational classroom.

These people have whacked teachers day in and day out. Do you expect those teachers to be happy in that educational classroom? They are so demoralized that you can't get an ounce of energy out of them to do anything good in these classrooms. God bless them if they still have energy to continue doing the good job they've been doing, but I would be so demoralized after these people have taken charge.

1630

We have a problem. The educational system needs money. The income tax they introduced hurt. It takes \$5 billion out of the economy. We New Democrats say that \$2 billion of that should go back into the health care system and educational system. We believe in that and we would do that as a party.

We also believe that 10% of educational dollars should come out of local levies so boards have the flexibility to respond to the needs of those areas. That's what we New Democrats believe in. We hope that the Liberals will state their position at some point, but that is what we believe in, and I thank you for your attention.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It's a pleasure to rise and discuss this issue.

Mr Gerretsen: Where is your tie?

Mr Maves: I'm getting some congratulations from Mr Gerretsen on my appearance today. I thank him for that. You look quite nice yourself, Mr Gerretsen.

It's interesting to listen and to follow the last two speakers, one for the Liberal Party and one for the NDP, the member for Fort York, Mr Marchese, who just spoke. There's one thing that he just doesn't get. As a former trustee who gave himself I believe about a 30% raise when he was a trustee of a Toronto school board, the one thing he doesn't get is that that's exactly the kind of thing we're trying to stop in this government. We're trying to tell people, we're trying to explain to boards and professionals in the school system, that we need to focus money into the classroom. We've got to take money out of supervisory activities, consultants, building more board buildings and trustees. That's what we said all along. We didn't get complete co-operation the first go-around, and so we became a little more defiant in our funding formula so that we could separate classroom instruction funding and non-classroom funding, and the boards would be tied, couldn't go and give themselves large raises. We set trustees' pay at \$5,000.

The member opposite has never understood that, the parties opposite have never understood that, but that's something we know parents have wanted for a long time.

That's something we know is important in the education system and that's one of the steps that we've taken.

The member opposite also talked about teachers' unions fighting with this government. Yes, it's no surprise to anyone that teachers' unions and our government have butted heads a few times. But I'd like the member to hearken back to when he was in office and his social contract. I had a lot of folks, a lot of teachers, coming into my campaign office who were none too happy with you on that side of the aisle.

The members from the Liberal Party, I remind you about 1990 and your provincial election, when those heads of teachers' unions hounded Premier Peterson all over the province. The fact of the matter that is over the last three governments, Liberal, NDP and Conservative, each government has had a difficult time dealing with those union leaders. Our government is no different. Change is difficult, not accepted by all.

The other member who spoke earlier, Mr Kennedy from York South, this gentleman has gotten a new nickname for himself over the last little while, Gerard "Create-a-Crisis" Kennedy. The member for York South always talks about the sky falling in health care, where he's a critic. Today he gets up and talks about the sky falling in education, trying to create a crisis in every facet of the provincial government.

An interesting little tidbit came out back in a Toronto Star column by Kelly Toughill on May 25, 1996. It talked about the member for York South when he was in his previous occupation and his successor, Sue Cox, at the food bank. She was talking about her relationship with Mr Kennedy and she said: "We would scream and yell like mad. We would have terrible fights." Then she went on, "Gerard has an ability to create an artificial crisis to get the adrenaline flowing."

She's not alone in her opinion. Let me explain. Recently the Sudbury Star said, right after the recent by-election — the Liberals are a little antsy and upset right now because they dropped about 12 points in the polls during that election, and they wonder why. Maybe this is an indication to them why. In the Sudbury Star on September 19 it said, "Kennedy would better serve voters by listening to what needs to be done in the system to ensure services" —

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): A point of order?

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's an opposition day motion talking about education and the damage that the Tory party has done to education. The member opposite is making personal attacks on members who aren't here. He should stick to the topic and to the motion or he should sit down. He's out of order.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I want to address the member for Oakwood. Speaking to the topic is a point of order. I've been listening very carefully to the member for Niagara Falls and he is talking to the general subject of the motion and that is my ruling.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I listened to the member for Oakwood rise on a point of order, sir. He made reference to members not being in this House and he has been in this House himself long enough to know that you don't do that. Would you remind him of the rules of order.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of order and I think he will hear it for himself.

Mr Gerretsen: On a further point of order, Mr Speaker: You and I know it's a tradition in this House not to refer to members by their names but rather by the name of the riding they represent. The member for Niagara Falls, for whom I have some regard, has mentioned individuals by name on at least five or six occasions in the last four or five minutes he spoke. Would you please remind the member not to refer to members by their names but rather to the ridings they represent.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of order, and I think that because he is here, he will probably have heard your advice. Thank you.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With regard to this ruling, it's my understanding that if a member is quoting from a newspaper article, as the member was doing, and is referring to members' names, that's perfectly in order. So I don't believe that the last point of order was in fact a point of order, given the circumstances.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think that the Speaker should recognize that the member for High Park-Swansea is promoting safety in Ontario by wearing hunter orange in the Legislature and I wanted to congratulate him for that.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr Maves: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'll just continue. This is important because people at home are watching this debate, and when they hear pieces of rhetoric from across the aisle, I want them to know that the credibility of some of these statements should be taken into account and that other people before have brought up these problems of credibility. The problem came forward for the member for York South very recently in the Sudbury Star.

I quote their quote:

"Kennedy would better serve voters by listing what needs to be done in the system to ensure services are in place once work is completed on the new Sudbury Regional Hospital. His fearmongering tactics are a disservice to this community."

The Sudbury Star goes on:

"Ontario Liberal Party health critic" — the member for York South; I'll change the quote — "needs to do some explaining if he wants anyone to believe his claims that money will be taken from Sudbury's health care system next year. Otherwise, the statement made by Kennedy in Sudbury this week is nothing more than a cheap attempt at electioneering that thoughtful voters will see through."

They did in that riding, and I would say that people across the province will continue to call these things into question.

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As a matter of fact this same member, as health critic for the Liberals, went into the Humber River hospital to do a press conference about all the dangers that people were facing there. Here's what happened: The CEO of the Humber River hospital wrote a letter to the member for York South, the Liberal health critic. The letter said:

"While it is our philosophy to be open to the community and to you as a leader in our community, your actions to date unfortunately demonstrate that you are not coming to us with an open mind seeking the facts."

The letter goes on:

"In reviewing the fact sheets you distributed to the media on July 30, 1997, and August 13, 1997, and a more recent one, released August 26, 1997, we find them to contain allegations of unsafe, poor-quality care and very few substantiated facts. We have reviewed each case to which you refer in these documents and have found the quality and safety of care provided was not once compromised."

Let me just finish. It says:

"While there are many issues and challenges in merging organizations and consolidating services which impact on our patients, staff and members of the community, you seem more interested in generating fear within the community around the safety and quality of care provided to individuals regardless of whether or not the facts support this conclusion."

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is it not part of the standing orders that members are not to read exclusively from written materials? I believe they can be filed with the table. That's standing order 37(d), I believe.

The Deputy Speaker: It is a standing order that no member should read from a document or the journals excessively, unnecessarily. I've been listening to the member for Niagara Falls for nearly six minutes now. He has had a couple of points of order, and I'm waiting for him to bring his debate within the terms of the resolution. I'm sure he'll make note of those other suggestions.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I'd appreciate your attention when I'm talking.

Mr Maves: When I'm reading I want to make sure I don't misquote other people on their opinion about the credibility of the member for York South. That's why I was explaining in close detail. All of that goes to the point that people at home should really take the rhetoric we heard from the member for York South on this motion today with a grain of salt.

Let me talk about some of the rhetoric they've used in the past. I remember back last year, in September, the rhetoric that came out from unions and members opposite, rhetoric like myths about Bill 160 at the time, that teachers could no longer be principals or principals would no longer be teachers — completely bogus. They said phys-ed teachers would be fired, they said music teachers

would be fired, phys-ed classes — I heard one would be 75 teachers. This was the fearmongering back at that time, that 10,000 teachers would be fired, and so on and so on.

If everyone hearkens back to all the rhetoric of a year ago, you can see the same type of rhetoric coming forward in today's debate. It doesn't serve the public well.

Another form of rhetoric that often gets tossed out is loss of teachers. In May, when boards send out layoff notices to teachers — and it happens in every board across the province; it has happened for years — members opposite jump up with great glee and condemn our government and say, "Look how many notices have gone out." I'll tell you, this year, as in other years, from my Niagara public board, secondary schools, 140 layoff notices went out in May. With great glee, the members opposite got up and talked about this. They all failed to mention that soon after, all 140 were recalled. In fact, in many boards across the province — for instance, at my Niagara Catholic board they have actually hired 95 new teachers at the elementary level and 22 new teachers at the secondary level.

Those things never get talked about, and when the public sit at home and listen in May when the layoff notices go out, they may not be aware that these people in almost every case get recalled. I've seen statistics for 1995, 1996, 1997. For my boards, for instance, the people who got layoff notices were all recalled. It continually happens in all the boards around the province, and many boards around the province are actually adding new teachers. People at home need to know that.

Members opposite seem to think that this government doesn't consult or talk to the public before we make a legislative move. Before we brought in Bill 160, even though we'd had a campaign and we talked widely for many years about our education initiatives and had written documents about our positions — we were going to move forward with a toolbox of initiatives. We pulled back and said, "Before we do this, we're going to go out" — we had the former NDP education minister, Dave Cooke, go out with the Education Improvement Commission, and they did a report on learning time, class size and staffing. They met with thousands of people and hundreds of organizations and they came back and they made recommendations. This government has followed most of those recommendations. When you throw at this government that we haven't consulted — we've done our homework. We've also utilized the royal commissions that the NDP had.

That's the reality, but the members opposite would prefer to continue to put forward the rhetoric in this House, and that's why it's important to lead off the way I did.

The minister talked about our new, more rigorous curriculum. A few people, a few teachers' union leaders I've seen, take some shots at the curriculum. When they do that, they take shots at their own membership, because it was teachers who wrote that new, more rigorous curriculum. Most front-line teachers I've talked to are very happy with that curriculum and very supportive of it.

Province-wide testing: Parents love province-wide testing. There's nothing wrong with accountability. It's our kids who are at stake. What's wrong with having some accountability in the system? It can be something very useful, very helpful, not to be feared. If there's a certain board or a certain school or certain teachers that continually perform well on province-wide testing and other that perform less well, perhaps those that do perform well can say: "What are we doing differently? What's happening here that's different, so that maybe we can help those boards and those schools, those teachers that aren't doing as well on this testing year after year?"

There's nothing wrong with that and our kids deserve that. I'm quite proud of province-wide testing and I'm finding that the good teachers who are out there — there are so many of them, and they know that they're good teachers — are happy with province-wide testing. They think that in the long run it's going to improve our system, as we do.

Our funding formula: I started off by saying our funding formula is all about directing more money into the classroom. We've got a recent article from the Niagara region, where the board is considering rationalizing its schools. I'm going to read a little bit from an article because I think some of what is being said in it is so instructive. I'm very proud of the superintendent who made some of these comments, very proud of the principal, the head of the principals' association down in Niagara, who made some I think very brave and very instructive comments.

"The public board has significant extra capacity, said John Sharp, superintendent of education, but it's 'far more serious at the secondary level'" — my board.

"The board has room for 42,845 students at its 115 elementary schools, said Sharp. Enrolment is about 30,000 students.

"At the secondary level, enrolment is about 16,000, but the board has room for 32,095 students in its 25 schools."

We are funding spaces that we have no students for. That's robbing the kids who are there of resources that could be utilized for their education, and that's wrong. This government, through its new funding formula, knows that's wrong and knows that needs to be changed. That's why more money, \$585 million more, is being directed into the classroom today than last year, because we're concentrating on funding that goes directly into the classroom.

I'll quote further from this article in my region.

"Even the principals have asked the board to close schools quickly.

"We see schools needing to be closed," said Janet Savard, principal of Carleton public school in St Catharines. Savard was head of the local principals' association in the spring when members passed a motion asking the board to act "expeditiously."

Why? "We've been subsidizing the small schools forever," said Savard....

"Principals have agreed that they will not get involved in any 'save our school movement,'" said Savard.

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"Despite the pain of losing a neighbourhood school, there are benefits to making the system more efficient," said Savard.

"Librarians, music teachers and other resources will be more readily available when school enrolments are up. Schools will be cleaned five days a week instead of the current four, and schools will have full-time secretaries....

"At the secondary level, small schools are also a burden, said Sharp.

"As the former principal of Eastdale Secondary in Welland, Sharp saw enrolment at his school go from 300 to 800 when another school in Welland was closed."

You've heard us say quite often that some boards have been very efficient over the years and closed the older, less efficient schools and rationalized their schools so they would be putting more emphasis on funding students. Mr Sharp continues:

"A bigger school gets better timetabling, with more options for students.

"Yes, it's emotional, no one wants a school to close"...but a bigger school 'is better educationally.'"

With that I'm going to leave off with the debate, because once you cut through the rhetoric, once you cut through the political fearmongering that comes from across the aisle, parents, many teachers and many people in the school system understand that it is more important to fund the classroom and stop funding waste so our students can get the best education in the world.

Mr Caplan: I hear a lot in this House, but the member for Niagara Falls — it absolutely amazes me — must be from another planet. He held up the EIC document, which says that any dollars cut out as a result of this government's actions should be reinvested into education, something this minister has refused to do. I wish the government members would read their own materials that they're going to present to this House before they do that. It would be very interesting if they actually did follow the advice they received from parents, from teachers, from opposition members, from all stakeholder groups. It never seems to happen.

Before I get into the heart of my comments, I want to mention that a number of my colleagues are going to speak to this bill and some won't have the opportunity. My colleague the member for Prescott and Russell, Jean-Marc Lalonde, has asked me to just make a note of a few things. We hear much about the cap on class sizes and how this is promoting quality. I think those were the minister's words. St Joseph school in Wendover, 27 students in a combined grade 6-grade 7 class; Saint-Victor school in Alfred, 27 students in a grade 3 class; Pope John Paul school in Hammond, 32 students in a grade 3 class; Ste-Trinité school in Rockland, 30 students in a grade 5 class; Rockland Public School, 36 students in a grade 6 class.

What happens to this cap and this quality that the minister talks about? It's absolute bull. The minister said he was full of bull. It's about the only thing we agree on. He is definitely full of something.

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me. I don't think that will enable the debate to carry on. I would give that second thought.

Mr Caplan: I am pleased to speak to this motion, because this government has created a crisis in education with its illegal Bill 160. Justice Cumming made it very clear: Bill 160 is illegal. In fact, their funding formula has robbed our children, robbed our students, robbed our parents, robbed our teachers of something so precious: education. An immediate, independent, objective review of the funding formula is very much needed.

I'd like to talk about the impact this funding formula has had on schools and classrooms in my riding of Oriole. Oriole is an incredibly diverse community. We have daycares in our schools. We have concerns about school closures, about busing, about there being adequate supervision in our playgrounds. Let me talk a bit about the daycares. There is no money in the funding formula to provide for those daycares in the schools. They provide an essential service, an essential part of education: early childhood education. We have a minister for children, who does God only knows what, but to cut those daycare centres — one has already been given an eviction notice; more are to follow.

The boards have a crisis on their hands. They now have to charge daycares full cost recovery. That will put these daycare centres, which are in the heart of the community school, in jeopardy. We know the Toronto District School Board can't guarantee they'll be able to stay, even if they were to find full cost recovery, even if they were able to come up with the dollars. The reason for that is that the schools might close themselves or, in order to amalgamate the space, they may have to force the daycares out of the schools.

I have to tell members of the House that 23 daycares in the riding of Don Valley East are in jeopardy of being forced out of schools, being forced to close. That is the legacy of this government. That is an absolute shame. It is literally putting kids and families in an incredibly perilous situation. You see, 23 schools have a community purpose that goes beyond this government's definition of education. As I said, the daycare centre at Don Mills has already been given an eviction notice. It's ironic that on a day when we had a private member's resolution from the member for Dufferin-Peel about flexibility for child care options we see that the inflexibility of the government's funding formula for education is closing down some of those options for my constituents in the riding of Oriole and in the riding of Don Valley East.

Let me take a minute to talk a bit about what the funding formula means for school closures. I've spoken with the parents of children in four schools in the Toronto Catholic District School Board. The schools are St Leonard, Blessed Kateri, Holy Redeemer and Our Lady of Mount Carmel. All are on the list to be closed; all have been identified by the board as not meeting the criteria that this government has placed, that this minister has placed. This government refuses to be held accountable.

The last member speaking, from Niagara Falls, talked about something courageous. I don't know what's

courageous about closing down classrooms. They say that education taking place in the classroom is very important to them, but their actions are quite a bit different, seeing the prospect of 600 closures across the province, like Romney in Essex-Kent and those four schools. But it doesn't stop there.

In just one small part of my riding of Oriole, I've spoken with the parents of children at Muirhead school, at Ernest school and at Cherokee school. I don't want to create undue apprehension, but these schools were listed in an article that was published in the Toronto Star earlier in the year as having been identified. Those decisions are going to come down later this month for the process to start for school closures. It is a very sad legacy.

I'll be the first to say that I will be there with the parents and communities to fight to keep those schools. They are valuable. They are the heart, the hub of the community. People use those not just for education of children but for community events as well — for Girl Guides, for religious groups, for international language, for a whole variety of purposes. You can't tear the heart out of our community. So why are these boards considering closing schools? Because of the inflexibility of Dave Johnson and his funding formula.

The funding formula has other implications. Parents from St Timothy contacted me about transportation. Their kids were denied busing to school. If you've been at the corner of Don Mills and Sheppard, you've seen the kind of construction that's going on there. The transportation grant that's contained in the funding formula has no flexibility, so those parents were informed that starting this September there would be no more transportation for those kids. How can you get the benefit of education if you can't even get to school? How can parents have confidence in education when they don't know if their children are going to arrive at school safely or arrive at home safely afterwards?

The boards have had their hands tied. This government has created a crisis. The funding formula needs to be immediately reviewed, and confidence and stability need to be returned to public education.

There's only one way; that's with new leadership, with Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party providing that stability, that confidence and that leadership.

I thank you, Speaker, and I look forward to the comments of the other members.

1700

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I rise to speak to this resolution. I have been reading this resolution most of the day, and I suggest that if we had had province-wide testing of grade 3 and grade 6, possibly this resolution might have had some substance to it and might have resembled something intelligent. If I look at this resolution, by the time I get to the final "whereas," I would say that education as we know it would be obsolete and we'd have to start all over again. So I have great difficulty with this type of resolution. That is one of the reasons why something that has not been changed in many years has to be changed.

I'm going to speak from the perspective of a grandfather who has children in our system, children I think a great deal of and I think the world of. I not only have children in the public school system here in Ontario, but I have children in the public school system in the US. It is most interesting to do some comparison.

The other day I was reading in the *Detroit News* where it is suggested that in Michigan the government there is trying to increase the amount of time that teachers spend in the classroom teaching the students. I think what it suggests is that not only in Ontario but in many places across this country and indeed across many places in North America, we have to change the way we're doing business or the way we are making sure that education is the quality it should be.

These changes, certainly in the last few years that nobody did anything about, have been in direct response to the parents, to the taxpayers and indeed the teachers themselves. If you look at the parents, should they not have some type of input into the way their children are taught? I believe they should. They bring them into this world, they nurture them, they raise them and follow them all through their life as best they can. Should they not have input into how they are educated?

I believe they should, and that is one of the reasons why we created parent councils. Recently, as of about two weeks ago, I met with about 70 parent council members who were extremely supportive, very supportive that they finally had some say in the way education is conducted in this province.

I also made comment about the taxpayers. Taxpayers are the people, and we're all part of it, who have to afford to pay the bills. I don't believe that taxpayers can afford any more taxes, nor indeed can they, as they have in the past, be part of a system that at the whims of boards, whatever, constantly raised taxes. Whether it's the seniors, the disabled, those who are on a fixed income, or indeed the business community itself, they cannot afford to pay any more. Indeed, the cost of education was running rampant in this country and this province.

Many of the teachers wanted change. They want change because they know as well that education has to change and that the way we've been doing things over the past many years has got to change.

I have a letter I would just like to read. It was faxed to me from a person who teaches in the Kawartha Pine Ridge school system. It reads:

"I am a high school teacher. Our union has been conducting work-to-rule. I'm a music teacher in high school who has put up with work-to-rule for five weeks now. I wish to begin extracurricular activities in my school. The union, in response, has threatened me with censure, fines of up to 21 days' gross salary, threatened to publish my name and to rid me of federation protection.

"My question is whether Dave Johnson, in the interests of students, could pass a regulation stating that teachers could not be prevented from or punished for conducting extracurricular activities. This would be a win-win situation for him. It would enable teachers to conduct

activities without fear of recourse on the union's part and also would stop the union from saying what they want to do," regarding work-to-rule. "So in effect he is not stopping the union from doing so," but would allow teachers to do.

That is a letter from a teacher. When I said that teachers want change, they want it. They want to be able to teach and are not able to because of union pressures. To me, that says it all. That's the situation that we have gotten ourselves into in this country.

As I mentioned, the taxpayers want to focus on the students in the classroom. In the past, education has been funded like a funnel: You pour the money into the top and it goes down through the bottom. But administration can control the amount of money that goes through the bottom part of that funnel. They are the ones that control the amount of money that goes to the classrooms. You know and I know — all you have to do is look at the buildings, look at the money that's been spent in administration over the past many years — what has happened. We, in comparison, want to show the reverse. We want to put the money in the top, let it trickle into the administration, and have the main part of those dollars go to the student in the classroom.

Indeed, it's funny. I think about this resolution. The only part of that resolution that has any substance whatsoever is one "whereas" that says, "We value our children's education and the dedication of Ontario's teachers." I do as well.

But one thing that really concerns me is the fact that when we talk about quality education, when we talk about a new curriculum, when we talk about a new report card, when we talk about parent councils, when we talk about more time in the classrooms, when we talk about set class sizes, those are all the things that we've heard about from some 22 reviews and three commissions over the years. Those are all of the things that we have been told will lead to quality education. Ask the teachers; ask the students; ask the parents. All of those things we believe will lead to quality education, and yet our opposition votes no and has the gall to suggest that they value our children's education and the dedication of our Ontario teachers.

I suggest that what has been happening in this House is constantly saying no to everything that is going to make our students better educated and prepared to be part of our society, to make sure they are equipped to compete in the global marketplace. Our opposition votes no to all that and, as I said, suggests that they believe in quality education.

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Certainly over the years there has needed to be change. Change is not perfect. I don't know very much of what is perfect these days. God is about the only one I ever run across who is, but if we don't change, if we don't prepare — they probably used to come to this House 100 years ago in a horse and buggy. I doubt very much if there are horses and buggies outside today. We have to be ready for change and that is what we're trying to do, but we seem to fail to remember the student who wants that change. As I

said at the start, I want to make sure that change is there, quality is there, the standards are there, so that my grandchildren will be able to be part of the society we all want.

I congratulate our government on what it's doing in education. It's long overdue. It is necessary because people have told us it's necessary. I support what we're doing. As I said, when I look at a resolution like this which says one thing, and yet they turn around over the last many months and votes no to everything that suggests we could improve education, I have real difficulty with that.

Mr Colle: In terms of this debate on the opposition day motion, I guess the critical thing is to put in perspective what we're here for today. We're here because we want to bring attention to the destructive forces that this government has unleashed on children in this province through their revolutionary changes. These are not constructive changes, and they wave the revolutionary flag. This government claims and is proud of being revolutionary. The tragedy is that the children have been victims of their revolution. It's been a reckless revolution. It's been a destructive revolution.

I don't mind if they play revolutionary games with adults, but they are now playing the revolutionary game, the ideological game at the expense of our children. They have made our schools the battleground of their revolution and that is shameful. That is appalling because what they've done is they've brought in innocent children who are there preparing themselves for their future and they have made them pawns in their revolutionary game.

That is what is at the essence of this Bill 160, the revolutionary thrust of Bill 104. It was all to take revolutionary control of education, to extract money out of education to feed the revolutionary changes. That's why parents and students are so appalled and upset at this government. We have a government that spends \$50,000 a day vilifying teachers and public education. Every day you turn on your television, every half-hour there's a government ad paid for by taxpayers that vilifies and attacks public education. That is appalling.

The public in fact is so upset. Everywhere you go they are saying, "I'm sick and tired of this government of Mike Harris running these ads with my money, tearing down, being destructive of public education." They are fed up with it. In fact, while we speak here, on another station there's probably one of these attack ads against public education being run by this minister and this government. This is the government and the minister and the backbenchers who stand up and say they value public education, they value teachers, while they're spending \$50,000 a day running high-priced television ads, not on off-hours, on prime time, attack ads on public education. So you wonder what their motives are.

Their motives, the public verified in a recent Angus Reid poll. They know that the government's motive is to extract money and control the system, not to improve education. If I look at what is happening to our schools, we see it's a government that's basically putting our kids at risk by turning our schools upside down. The teachers,

the parents and the students are really at their wits' end in trying to figure out what this government will change and revolutionize tomorrow. There is so much disruption and chaos that this government has caused that you had 40,000 children at the SkyDome for the first time in the history of this province literally booing this Premier — 40,000 children, and I think as someone said, "Ontario, listen to your children." Children don't have a political agenda, but the children feel they are being victimized by this revolutionary government that is basically hell-bent on turning schools, on turning communities upside down.

Can you imagine that this is a government that has planned to close hundreds and hundreds of schools in this province? In your own community there are schools they're planning to close, Mr Speaker. In my community, in all our communities they are going to close down schools, possibly up to 600 schools in our province. Never in any jurisdiction in the western world have we've seen this massive assault on public education that this government is perpetrating in this revolutionary zeal they have, to what end I don't know, but who will stand there and fight and defend the kids? It's not this government, so I think it's up to the parents, the communities, and they're going to fight this government.

I know there are meetings being held all over this province to try and stop this government from closing down their community schools. The community is saying: "We as taxpayers over the last 30, 40 or 50 years paid for these schools, to build them, to maintain them. What right has big government down at Queen's Park to come and tell us that you're going to rip the school out of our community?" What right does the Minister of Education have to do that, when that school's been paid for by local taxes over and over again, for years, and now this government comes along and says, "We are going to rip that school out of your community."

I think the ratepayers and the parents and the students across this province, in every town and city, are saying, "We are not going to let this government do that." They are going to protect their schools from these closures. They are going to fight to keep those doors open, to keep children in those schools because those schools belong to the children, they belong to the taxpayers in those communities, and they don't belong to the government. They have no right to dictate closures arbitrarily from central headquarters here at Queen's Park. Those are locally paid for schools, by local ratepayers whose hard-earned tax dollars paid for them. The communities built them literally brick by brick and they won't have this minister and this Premier close their schools down.

I think they're in for the fight of their life. If they thought they were in for a fight with the hospitals, wait till you see the fight they're going to get into when they start to try and close down community schools. In Toronto alone they want to close up to 180 to 200 schools and they've got the gall to do that when the Minister of Finance arbitrarily decrees a higher tax rate for Toronto schools than schools anywhere else in the province. We pay \$300 million more for property taxes on commercial

for education, set by this Minister of Finance and his cabinet colleagues by decree — \$300 million more — and they're telling us they're also now going to close down up to 200 of our schools.

The taxpayers of Toronto will not stand for it: three hundred million more on top of regular taxes that they paid to keep their schools going. Now this government says, "We're going to close them down." They're in for the fight of their life.

1720

In terms of the education system itself, the education system has never been perfect in Ontario. I think the only education system that was supposedly perfect was the one in the Soviet Union 20 or 30 years ago, and that was not, as we know, perfect. It was fraught with problems because it was overcentralized. Our education system in Ontario has had some flaws in it. We all know that. They can be corrected. But it's just like if you have a home: If the kitchen sink and the plumbing in your kitchen don't work, you don't bulldoze down the home. You fix the kitchen sink and make sure the plumbing is fixed. What this government has done is come into the school, which needs some repair and retrofits and reinvestment, and they're bulldozing our schools and our education system. What we need is fine-tuning, investment, innovation. We don't need bulldozing.

Our parents, our teachers, our students need support. They need positive reinforcement, not constant attack ads on TV. Why not put those constant attack ad dollars into the schools to clean the schools and buy computers, buy books, buy better library equipment, rather than spend and waste millions on attack ads on TV? You get a lot more with honey than you do with vinegar, as they say. You get a lot more with positive reinforcement. This government is hell-bent, as I said, on destroying, vilifying, condemning everything about public education. I tell you, they're in for a fight because the parents are blaming this government for the chaos. They see through the rhetoric, they see through the condemnation. They aren't going to stand it.

If you look at our schools, our schools do not have everything they need. Our teachers need support. They're not all perfect, but I'll tell you, there's a lot more good teachers than bad teachers. There's a lot more good students than bad students.

We had a Premier of this province going before the chamber of commerce or whatever it was a couple of weeks ago. He had the audacity to tell them that our kids in Ontario don't measure up to his standards. What kind of Premier is it that condemns his own students under his own system? Students need support. They don't need lectures and condemnation from a Premier. I think we can do a lot better if we help our students with more investment in them, less investment in attack ads; more investment in people, teachers. Stop attacking them daily. Help people rather than attack them.

But this government is not going to change its direction. It's hell-bent on saying they can get some cheap votes by attacking. They will keep attacking teachers, public education, children if they have to, to get their political agenda through. The people of Ontario see through this

facade. They are going to give this government the lesson of their lives come the next election because they see through all this phony ideological revolution that they've launched on the people of Ontario.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's my pleasure to rise and respond to the opposition day motion and add something to the discussion with respect to education. It's important to hear in this House that there is on all sides recognition that the system had to be reformed. That's clearly the history that I'm going to be bringing to this discussion today.

We're supposed to learn from history or we're doomed to repeat it. In my riding there are five boards, district boards as they're now referred to, and at some point in my remarks I'll bring some very specific points to the debate with respect to quality education in Ontario. In fact, in Durham we should be very proud of many of the results in education, provided that the system at the time and the curriculum at the time and the report cards at the time were all less than adequate. I could bring to your attention that the Durham Board of Education was one of the leaders in development of curriculum and development of standardized report cards.

All this was happening when we first met — the then director of education was Pauline Laing. As you would know, she went on to become the curriculum leader at the Ministry of Education, not only as a symbol of excellence in that board, but the ministry recruits, I believe, many of the best people to make the needed improvements.

I look to our current Minister of Education. As a bit of preparation for today, I asked to get some information. I started by looking at what is the plan. I brought forward here the Ontario government's business plan for 1998-99. I would encourage each and every one of you to avail yourselves of a copy of this public document, and for anyone watching today to call my office, because it certainly clarifies the plan, not just for education, but indeed, and respectfully, under the leadership of our Premier, setting a clear vision and a clear set of instructions on what the mandate is.

The discussion here today is about education. Our commitment has to be there in writing. It's not some debatable thing, that we're going to debate away quality education. The rest of these elusive comments need to be accountable. Our comments need to be accountable and measurable, as the boards do and as the students themselves do. I think they want that. I think the teachers do as well. For too long we've had a system that wasn't accountable.

I'll just read a couple of things in the business plan signed by our Minister of Education this year.

"We have introduced a new funding formula for education which will offer students access across Ontario to fair and quality education no matter where they live."

No one would dispute that, but that was a long-overdue reform.

"This new formula will see additional five hundred and eighty-three million new dollars to be spent in the classroom."

That's where the money is and that's the significant change we see. Many of the boards are stacked up in opposition to us and the reason is because clearly there are envelopes of where the money should be spent. As the member for Peterborough mentioned in his comments, clearly the money should be spent in the classroom first. There should never be a shortage of resources in the classroom when we have excess resources, perhaps, in other areas.

He says that an additional \$583 million is to be spent in the classroom while reducing administrative duplication and waste.

Clearly the job is not done there. I hear continually from my riding that that's still an issue. They're not satisfied. Any resources in the board offices should become school-based resources. I think that's the solution to many of the debates when it comes to the amount of teacher time. We have teachers who aren't in the classroom. Yes, I hear from my constituents. But when you look at our direction, our goal, our minister's objective is to reduce the size of classes — in secondary one and 22 and in elementary one and 25. When I know there are teachers who are not in the classroom, the resource-based teacher with no students, somebody else has their students.

The minister at the macro level, for those of you listening, must accept their business plan and their business plan, their budget, must demonstrate what is in Bill 160; that is, one and 22 in the secondary and one and 25 in the elementary. They have discretion and flexibility at the board level to allocate resources — that is, teachers — into other positions of non-teaching, but that ultimately means class sizes are going to be larger. So when parents call me in my riding of Durham East, concerned about the size of classes, I give them the names of their school trustees. By the way, I might add, most of them don't know who they are, which is unfortunate.

I do the best I can. I let them know who the people are who are publicly elected to report on quality education and to be accountable for quality education in their area.

There are several initiatives in this budget document that I have to share in the very limited time left. The new approach includes \$1.2 billion over three years to protect class size. That's all part of this new sizing of classes. We're providing the capital funding. A very important initiative is the over \$1 billion for special education. There are two levels of grants in special education, the SEPA grant that every student gets a portion of. There is in total over \$1 billion for the ISA, the intensive support amount, the high-cost students — absolutely critical. The minister, I'm sure, is addressing that issue as I speak.

Over the last year we've increased the funding by some \$40 million in that special education envelope. Those children with special needs — I know our minister is clearly listening.

1730

I've got to put on the record here that the background in education reform starts way before the 1990s, when I was a trustee. I'm referring to the Royal Commission on

Learning, the document by Monique Bégin and Gerald Caplan. We're all familiar with it. It's called *For the Love of Learning*. I know the members here are all familiar with it. There are over 160 recommendations. I'm just going to review a few of them in the remaining couple of minutes. Unfortunately I should have much more time on this.

I challenge all those in the House and indeed I challenge those watching today, those educators who I know believe this debate is important. I use this as a scorecard. In fact, I'm going to start at the very end just to see how we're doing here. Recommendation 167: "That an implementation commission be established to oversee the implementation of the recommendations made by the Royal Commission on Learning."

Well, we have the Education Improvement Commission, the EIC. And who did we put on that? We put David Cooke, who was the previous Minister of Education for the New Democratic Party, and Ann Vanstone, who was the chair of the Toronto Board of Education. These people have their own political commitments and their own commitment to education. They're holding us to it. In fact they had a meeting this morning to deal with the school community councils.

In this whole thing, the thing establishes many of the things that we put into regulation. It talks about class size, it talks about the important role of parents, it talks about testing, it talks about the College of Teachers. Almost everything our government has brought in with respect to the important focus of quality and accountability in the public education system is in this document. If anybody wants one, I would ask them to call my constituency office at (905) 697-1501, Durham East, John O'Toole, and you'll get a copy.

This is the most important debate in the history of Ontario. Our students should come first in this debate. This is all about students in classrooms. You'll never find me in argument or disagreement that we must support our teachers and our teachers need to be in the classrooms. When they're not in the classrooms, I believe we should be questioning how much value added to the life of those students and the education of those students there really is.

There is far too much for me to cover in this time, but I do want to comment on the commitment of the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, Mr Bruce Smith. Mr Smith from Middlesex has been an asset to each and every one of the schools and boards in this province.

Mr Gerretsen: I just have a few very short comments to make on this subject. Let me say that the people out there in Ontario must be really confused about this issue. They constantly hear information in the media, either from one side or the other, and they must be totally confused. The government has been saying basically, "We're spending a lot less money but we're making it better." That's been their argument about a lot of things, about health care and education.

I think it is all about money. I think where people have some real difficulty in understanding this is that you've taken \$1 billion out of primary and secondary education.

One billion dollars has been taken out by this government over the last three to four years, and when you think about it, all you have to do is look at the budgets of the individual school boards and you realize that 85% to 90% of it is in salaries for teachers.

For the life of me, I don't think people will buy the argument that if you take \$1 billion out of budgets that are primarily salary-oriented, you can end up with more money for teachers. What you end up with is \$1 billion less and therefore you end up with fewer teachers in the system. Yet our population in this province is growing all the time, so on that score alone, the argument that the government advances is very poorly orchestrated. Nobody is going to buy the fact that if you take more money out of a system that is salary-oriented, you end up with more money for more teachers. The bottom line is there are going to be fewer teachers, and class sizes are going to rise. It doesn't really matter what it says in your legislation, that you want smaller classes. You will see that with the different systems out there, the school boards simply won't be able to meet your targets because there won't be enough money in the system to allow them to do that.

Let's just very quickly, in the two minutes I've got left, talk about what's happening in Waterloo region: 12 schools are to be closed. In your own district, Speaker — you know all about this — in the Avon Maitland board, up to 17 schools are to close. Even Bert Johnson, the member for Perth, said on one particular day, "I think the chair of the board has put these potential closures out in the public prematurely." What's happening in Guelph? Nine schools are closing; in Hamilton-Wentworth, 10 to 15 schools; here in Toronto, somewhere between 120 to 180 schools; in Niagara district, 10 schools are to close; 60 more in Lambton-Kent; Halton, 17 schools are being closed.

You add on top of that the fact that this government has spent something like \$6.4 million — money that could have gone into the schools, money that could have been used by the boards to hire those expert teachers — on an advertising campaign that they should have paid for with their own party money rather than government money. It is shameless.

The people of Ontario will not buy the argument that if you take \$1 billion out, somehow you improve the system. The people who really suffer in all of this in the long run are the children in our school system, and for that we can hold this government accountable.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate on the resolution. Let me pick up where the former speaker mentioned the number of schools in Hamilton-Wentworth that are now on the chopping block. Indeed there are up to 15 schools that will close as a result of the government changing the funding formula.

In answers to questions in this House, the new education czar, the Minister of Education, will say: "Well, there've been school closures before under all governments so what's the big deal? Why is the opposition raising this the way they are?" The fact of the matter is

that any closures that happened in the past took place because of the number of students in a school. If there weren't enough students there to substantiate maintaining the school, then a decision was made, following a long community involvement process, that led to that closure. That's not what's happening here. This is all about the fact that there's not enough money. It's not a question of not enough students.

The timelines that have been put on this process, whereby at the end of the year the boards have to have their recommendations in or their information in, again the minister stands there and says, "Well, it's not my decision, it's the board's." But the reality is that when you say to the board, "Unless you give us your list of schools that are going to close, you're not going to get any more money in terms of capital investment in your community," you've put a gun to the head of that board and you have de facto made that decision.

This is not the first time. We've seen this game before. The health restructuring commission: "We're not closing any hospitals," the government said. "Oh, no, it's that awful, evil body, the health restructuring commission. They're doing it, not us. We wouldn't close any hospitals. It's that commission that's doing it." Meanwhile the reality is that commission was created by this government, you appointed the people who are on that commission and you are as accountable for those hospitals closing as the people who are signing the paper, and everybody knows that.

Municipally right now, and certainly in my community of Hamilton-Wentworth and in every other community across Ontario, there is outrage at what's happening with property taxes. Once again you hear the minister stand up and say: "Oh, but we didn't do that. That was those awful municipal councils. They did that. They're the ones that are hurting you." The reality is the downloading of responsibilities on to municipalities has left in my community of Hamilton-Wentworth a shortfall of \$38 million — \$38 million that you shortchanged my community. Our council had no other choice after they made all the cuts that in good conscience they could make and still maintain a civilized, decent community. They have had to increase the taxes to cover that off. You did that.

1740

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Poor management.

Mr Christopherson: I hear the member from Bedrock in the corner saying, "Poor management."

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): You must call them by their names, not any other term.

Mr Christopherson: The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale is yabba-dabba-dooing from the corner, "Poor management." He's blaming the municipality. There he is saying: "It's your fault. You can't run things right." It's always somebody else's fault. So the schools closing is not your fault, it's the boards, even though you've told them, "If you don't give us a list of schools that are closing, you don't get the capital investment."

You said, when the hospitals are closing, "That's not us, it's the commission," although you rammed the legislation through that created the commission, you appointed the people who are on it and you are as accountable as they are.

That's what's going on. There were a number of us, for anyone who wants to check back, who said in this very House, and it's in the Hansard, over two years ago that this was the game plan. It was that obvious. It's there in the Hansard for anyone who wants to look it up. Certainly I said it. I know others of my colleagues in the NDP said it: "Here's what's happening. This is a set-up where you're hoping that the local entities that have to make the decisions carry the freight."

Then, on top of all that, you're going to run around in the next election and say: "Oh, but we cut taxes by 30%. We're the good ones in this. We're the good people. We're the good guys. It's that restructuring commission. It's those school boards. It's those municipal boards. They're the ones that are evil. They're the ones that cut your services. They're the ones that have cut your programs. They're the ones that have raised your taxes, not us." Yet the reality is you did it.

To pay for that 30% tax cut that you're so proud of, that, by the way, isn't giving you the job creation you were making so much noise it was going to — it hasn't even achieved that, and of course it couldn't — you had to take \$5 billion to \$6 billion out the system because you said no to \$6 billion of revenue. That's money that doesn't come into the provincial government. Like any budget, when you've got money that's not coming in, then you've got to cut expenditures. You cut those expenditures by closing our hospitals, by raising our property taxes, by raising user fees and, yes, by shutting down schools.

There's a demonstration in Hamilton tomorrow at 3:35 out in front of Allenby school, 357 Hunter Street West. I guarantee you there will be a lot of people there because they've been through this before. They have fought before for that school. It's probably one of the best examples the government would ever see of a small community school that is the focal point of a revitalized neighbourhood.

What does Mike Johnston, who's the chair of the Allenby parent council, say? "If Allenby school is forced to close, it will impact not only on the Locke Street neighbourhood but also on Hamilton's efforts to revitalize the downtown core." Not to mention the fact that in a lot of the areas of my riding in downtown Hamilton, those schools represent the only haven kids have from asphalt. It is not just their school; it's their recreation centre. In many cases it's the only extracurricular activities that they have that keep them there instead of hanging out at a mall. These are people who are already facing challenges in terms of income. In many cases, in that part of my riding, a lot of people do not have English as their first language. By changing the funding formula and equalizing it, as you say, you are denying the children in my riding the kind of education that we all received and that they're entitled to.

As for Bill 160, every government has had their fights with teachers in terms of legislation and having a

governing role, but never have we seen 120,000 teachers do what they did a few months ago in fighting for students and saying, "It's important for me to be out there and lend my credibility to the fight to save the education system for the kids I want to teach."

Those are my constituents. They're our children. You have no right and no mandate to do this to our kids.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I'm very happy to speak to this resolution that I agree with. I wish to put on record a letter that I received from a parent who has a child who attends Century Secondary School. Century is a vocational school. There aren't that many left in Ontario, but there certainly are some in larger urban centres.

What we're facing in Windsor is the possible closure of six of our high schools. What's very important to note is that any time we have had school closures in Ontario's history, it has solely revolved around student enrolment. In the past, in the Windsor and Essex county areas, there have been discussions around the closure of Forster and Harrow high schools. They have surrounded the issue of student enrolment.

Of course they've addressed those issues. What they realized, over much deliberation locally, by local trustees and parental input, was that those schools had a value in their community that went far beyond what the student enrolment as a percentage was in that community. Because the local school board was able to raise some portion of their total revenue from the local property tax base, the people who lived there said that this was worth the investment to keep the school open in the community.

The high school, Forster, sits in the middle of the west end of Windsor. There are grade schools in the neighbourhood. There is the vibrant Sandwichtown on the west side of Windsor. Now we have 200 people showing up at the first meeting at Forster to talk about how difficult it would be for those kids to move from the west end grade schools, one of which has just been refurbished and rebuilt, to go who knows where to attend a high school.

I read you a letter from a parent from Century Secondary School:

"I sat at the meeting for one and a half hours on September 28, 1998, listening to former students and teachers alike, on why Century should stay open.

"I have a partly autism child that will graduate at her full ability this year, and now has a chance in life, to be a part of the working class, if it were not for a school like Century.

"If you would have watched her growing up in a regular grade school, she had rocks thrown at her, name calling etc etc every day, despite my wife and I waiting for her and picking her up every day. What a nightmare. Without Century she should not have reached her full potential. Merging a regular high school and a vocational school does not work.

"Another reason is financial. If these schools do merge, the stress of trying to keep up to regular children in fashion and appearance in general will be so great that the

dropout rate will be enormous. These children will become one of Harris's statistics: welfare, mother's allowance....

"The board has already closed down two vocational schools to save money, Monarch and Shawnee. Let's put it this way: Pay now or pay later. Give these children a chance, please."

I would like to personally invite the Minister of Education, Dave Johnson, to come to Kennedy collegiate high school on Tuesday, October 13, for a parent meeting of a number of parents who are coming together over a number of schools that are going to be forced to close.

I called the director of our Windsor board of education yesterday and spoke with him and I said: "I just wanted to tell you and I wanted to get your feedback. The Minister of Education says that the school closures will be your fault. These are your decisions and essentially it's your fault. I want to tell you the difficulty that our Minister of Education places every director of education in in Ontario, understanding that the government will not stand up and say what it is they are doing and laying the blame wholly on the part of some other level of government for them to take the fall politically."

1750

I can tell you that's exactly what's happening in Windsor. But the people in Windsor aren't going to fall for this too many more times. We've already seen the effects in our health care system in Windsor. We know exactly what happens when the government cuts money from our Windsor hospitals. Then we see the advertising campaign that they decide to launch. In my community they chose to put up a highway sign, signed by the Premier, that said, "Look, your Ontario tax dollars at work." I invite the Premier to come to Windsor so he can see my sign. It's a duplicate image that says, "Give back our tax dollars." It's a beautiful sign. Now I didn't spend taxpayers' money to put up that sign and the Premier shouldn't have done it either. Sheer, clear propaganda.

What's very disturbing about the education debate is that if the government were doing right by the people and kids in Ontario, they would not have to spend over \$6 million in propaganda ads to try to get their message out because the parents in Ontario of the some two million children who are in the system today would see the effects of what you're doing if it was a good thing. You wouldn't need to spend money on ads at prime time during the news hours, at dinnertime, to try to launch your message through to parents. I wouldn't have a parent come to me in great surprise and say, "I don't understand why my kid is still sitting on a radiator in the classroom because that's how many children there are in the classroom."

Why is it that when the Premier had to do his next press conference advancing some other item in terms of change, they went to a class and they said to the teacher, "Bring 20 of your students in so we can do the photo op." That teacher had to select 20 of the 31 in her class to then appear on television that day because the class you selected had 31 kids in it, not the supposed 22 or 25 that you're purporting to be the number who are going to be in the class, thanks to this new school funding formula.

The people of Ontario will not buy this because the facts are exactly as we see them. Just as we see the Minister of Health ignoring and denying the facts of the matter in health care, and we see the Comsoc minister denying the facts of workfare and its failure, now we have the Minister of Education joining the ranks, burying his head in the sand and saying, "We don't have a problem here." We have a problem in education in Windsor. We would not be closing schools in Windsor and Essex county because of student enrolment this year, and instead we're faced with school closures.

I'd like to quote from a former principal who's now retired. His name is Gene Pavan. He was the principal of Monarch when it closed because of student enrolment. He spoke at the Forster school closure meeting and what he said was very interesting when we're talking about vocational schools especially: "Here are students you need to work with to ensure come to school every day. You need to make sure they find their place in the world and need that kind of extra help."

When they closed that school and forced those students to move to other vocational schools in the area, within one year those students who had been moved, 50% of them dropped out of high school. Even today, after a year or so of retirement, Mr Pavan still remembers that year and felt personally responsible for how many of those kids would have gone on and to what potential had they graduated from high school, but for decisions that had been made at the time because of student enrolment.

But that's not where we are today. Today we're talking about school closures because of this government's school funding formula. They've made a determination of a certain number of feet allowed per student and that's it. Now you can pass this off and say it's just partisan ramblings, but we talked to the former Conservative candidate from Essex county who chairs the Windsor board of education, who says: "We have no flexibility with this formula. We can't help it. We don't have the money. These decisions are being forced on us." That lays the blame right at the feet of the minister.

That's why this Minister of Education should be at Kennedy high school on Tuesday, October 13, in the evening for that meeting with parents. I need that minister to explain to those parents. It has nothing to do with student enrolment. It has everything to do with the fact that they are not allowing funding for janitor services, secretary services, to turn the lights on in these places. The fact is that Forster high school is a community school in the west end of Windsor that has brought into that school Sandwich health centre, various community programs, to keep that west end of Windsor alive with a place for those students to go in the evening, with community things that happen in that school. That is what trustees said was of value to those people on the west side of Windsor, and this government's funding formula will deny that to the people of the west end of Windsor, I might add, the same group of people that lost a west side emergency room because of the closure of our hospital at that end of town as well as the closure of the Grace

emergency site, once again all focused in the west end of Windsor.

During that last parents' meeting at Forster, one of the parents stood up and said: "What else is our community going to lose? We've already lost two emergency rooms at the west end. Now we're going to lose our high school." Let me tell you that if you choose to go forward without significant change in your school funding formula, which does not work, we will not let the local people take the blame. The blame will lie squarely at your feet. What is happening in Windsor is being repeated throughout Ontario.

When Dalton McGuinty was at Harrow high school, he looked around and saw that those people who were advocating for Harrow high school weren't necessarily the parents of the kids who go there. They weren't necessarily the councillors who represent the Harrow area or the mayor there. It was the business community, the small business community which could clearly see the economic benefit of Harrow high school on that town, because if you close the high school in Harrow, what reason do people have to continue to go into the downtown of Harrow?

I would ask every member of this House to consider what benefits a school has on community and what benefits and what responsibility we have as taxpayers for all those things in providing education in an area. This is a very serious item for this government in rural areas, in urban areas, and in particular in old neighbourhoods which now tend to be filled with new Canadians who may be the least able to fight for themselves. We will continue to fight for them.

The Speaker: Mrs McLeod has moved opposition day number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members; it will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1758 to 1803.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Boyd, Marion	Cordiano, Joseph	Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Bradley, James J.	Crozier, Bruce	Lankin, Frances
Brown, Michael A.	Curling, Alvin	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Duncan, Dwight	Pupatello, Sandra
Christopherson, David	Gerretsen, John	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Hoy, Pat	Silipo, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Kennedy, Gerard	

The Speaker: All those opposed please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Amott, Ted	Johnson, David	Sheehan, Frank
Carroll, Jack	Kells, Morley	Skarica, Toni
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Smith, Bruce
Clement, Tony	Leach, Al	Snobelen, John
Danford, Harry	Maves, Bart	Spina, Joseph
DeFaria, Carl	Munro, Julia	Stewart, R. Gary
Ecker, Janet	Mushinski, Marilyn	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ford, Douglas B.	Newman, Dan	Tilson, David
Froese, Tom	O'Toole, John	Turnbull, David
Galt, Doug	Parker, John L.	Vankoughnet, Bill
Gilchrist, Steve	Rollins, E.J. Douglas	Villeneuve, Noble
Grimmett, Bill	Runciman, Robert W.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Hardeman, Ernie	Sampson, Rob	Wilson, Jim
Hastings, John	Saunderson, William	Young, Terence H.
Johnson, Bert	Shea, Derwyn	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 20; the nays are 44.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It now being just past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock later this evening.

The House adjourned at 1805.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Long-Term Care, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Soins de longue durée, ministre délégué aux affaires des personnes âgées	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Cornwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Don Mills	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Durham Centre / -Centre	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Durham East / -Est	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Durham West / -Ouest	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Durham-York	Munro, Julia (PC)	London South / -Sud	Wood, Bob (PC)
Eglinton	Saunderson, William (PC)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	Middlesex	Smith, Bruce (PC)
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Etobicoke-Humber	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président		
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)		
Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)	Sarnia	Boushy, Dave (PC)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Sault Ste Marie /	
Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
		Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)
		Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Oriole	Caplan, David (L)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)		
Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa-Rideau	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
		Victoria-Haliburton	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, président du Conseil de gestion
Ottawa West / -Ouest	Cullen, Alex (L)		
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Waterloo North / -Nord	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Parry Sound	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
		Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Wentworth North / -Nord	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Willowdale	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)		
Prescott and Russell /		Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Windsor-Riverside	Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Prince Edward-Lennox-		Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
South Hastings /		Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Prince Edward-Lennox-		York Centre / -Centre	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)		
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	York Mills	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
	Conway, Sean G. (L)	York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
Renfrew North / -Nord	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
Riverdale		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)
S-D-G & East Grenville /			
S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Nickel Belt	Vacant
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs		
	Bradley, James J. (L)		
St Catharines	Froese, Tom (PC)		
St Catharines-Brock	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement		
St George-St David			

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario**
Second Session, 36th Parliament

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Deuxième session, 36^e législature

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of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 8 October 1998

Jeudi 8 octobre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 8 October 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 8 octobre 1998

The House met at 1830.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: There obviously isn't a quorum of government members. Would you ascertain, please.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Clerk, can you check and see if there's a quorum, please.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

APPRENTICESHIP AND CERTIFICATION ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998

SUR L'APPRENTISSAGE ET LA RECONNAISSANCE PROFESSIONNELLE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 55, An Act to revise the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act / Projet de loi 55, Loi révisant la Loi sur la qualification professionnelle et l'apprentissage des gens de métier.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): We'll resume. I believe the last speaker was Mr Duncan from the Liberal Party. Responses and comments?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I'd like to comment on the remarks of the members from Windsor-Walkerville and Ottawa Centre. During their remarks they focused on a key issue that we feel very strongly about, and that is the need for public hearings.

We know this government has a disdain for the public. God forbid working people having a say in the important business of Mike Harris's agenda, but the reality is that you owe it not just to the workers who are now in the trades, the apprentices who are in the trades, but anybody who's watching in terms of their children having an opportunity to have a fair and appropriate apprenticeship system that at the end of the day gives them the skills and the qualifications they need to uphold the tremendous tradition tradespeople have in Ontario. That can only be done if those individuals and their representatives get an opportunity to see what's inside Bill 55, have an opportunity to voice their opinion on the importance of having

and continuing an effective apprenticeship program for the young people of this province.

The government likes to talk about the fact that they care so much about young people. They can talk about the fact that they recognize that the rate of unemployment among our youth is higher than any other age group, but when it comes to the rubber hitting the road and actually doing something, the words mean nothing. Once again, anything to do with working people, their working conditions, their ability to have decent wages and decent benefits, is under attack by this government. We challenge you and say you have an obligation to provide public hearings.

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): We heard just a second ago from the member for Hamilton Centre. The bill, the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, does exactly the opposite of what he says. It actually provides flexibility in apprenticeships and the certification system. It provides workers and employers with excellent programs in existing — and, most important, I think the bill addresses those emerging skills markets or skills opportunities or occupations. It streamlines and clarifies the roles in allowing specific requirements to be determined outside of the new act and regulations. Rather than putting it in the act, it provides the opportunity to make those through regulations.

The member for Hamilton Centre made reference to youth unemployment and actually the current act itself creates barriers for the participation of youth. He says he's a champion of youth and the unemployed. We have 14.5% youth unemployment in the province. I would think he would embrace this act which provides more opportunity for young people to consider more trades that are there. What it really does is provide more flexibility.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Would you ascertain whether or not there's a quorum?

The Acting Speaker: Clerk, could you check and see if there's a quorum, please.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I must say that the speeches I just heard from members of the Liberal caucus — in fact I heard them last day — on this subject were outstanding. They made all the salient points that

were to be made and I really believe they understand fully the implications of this bill.

One part that I will isolate is that of tuition because we know the history of tuition with this government. If you want to find a comparison, look at the tuition for community colleges and universities, which is now sky-high — in fact, the sky's the limit — because we have a situation where it's deregulated. Some people within the university community — not the students — have applauded this and said, "This is great because we need the money." Indeed, universities must be adequately funded, but here we are going to the hard-pressed students, those who might be affected by this particular bill, for instance, those who need the jobs, and we're saying to them, "You have to pay a higher and higher tuition."

What is the consequence of that? There are two sets of people who will be able to access university and community colleges and perhaps, if it happens, an apprenticeship. Those two sets of people are going to be (a) the very, very clever people who have the marks which will allow them to obtain scholarships, and that's fine; and (b) the very wealthy people. But for those who come from a house where there's a modest income — perhaps there will be three or four children in the family and not a very high income — they're going to have to put themselves into such debt that they won't get out of debt for years and years, because this government is saying that tuition shall go up. The rising tuition is going to bring us back to the 1940s and 1950s, where only the very best students academically and only the very wealthiest students will have access to our education system.

1840

Ms Lankin: I'm pleased to respond to the comments from the member for Windsor-Walkerville. In particular, I want to address the need for public hearings on this bill. While there are a number of issues, there are four key issues I would like to raise, because I think it's important for legislators to hear from members of the public and particularly to hear from those who will be affected by this legislation. They're very aptly contained in a letter from a woman whose name is Colleen Twomey. She's a 35-year-old hospital worker who was laid off and has gone into an apprenticeship now.

The first point she makes is her concern that the government's plan to target apprenticeship programs to the youth sector will exclude someone like her. She goes on to say that the government's desire to transfer the responsibility for setting wage levels for apprenticeships to employers and workers to discuss will result in her being trapped in low-wage jobs through that apprenticeship.

She already had to take a major cut in pay, being laid off from her hospital job, to go into an apprenticeship. She's trying to get her life back together and to retrain. She's doing the right thing, but worries about whether or not there will be fair treatment of apprenticeships with respect to wage levels set out; and with lower wage levels that are attendant with that proposal, the impossible situation people will be in trying to pay for user fees or tuition fees in order to enter the apprenticeship, which is another

part of the proposal that's not been clarified by the minister in terms of levels but that is of great concern and is seen as a potential barrier to participation in apprenticeships.

Of course the fourth point is the proposal to phase out regulated journeyperson-to-apprenticeship ratios and replace them with voluntary measures and guidelines. This I think is nothing more than an invitation for a full journeyperson's wages and people to be replaced by apprenticeships. It's open to serious abuse. Those are the things we need to hear about and it is very important that we hold public hearings on this bill.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Windsor-Walkerville.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I appreciate the comments of my colleagues from Hamilton, Beaches-Woodbine, St Catharines and St Catharines-Brock. I wanted to remind members, particularly on the government side, that what I spoke about last night was the impact these changes have not only in terms of accessibility but, moreover, in terms of quality of apprenticeship and ultimately what effect that has on Ontario's competitive position.

I remind members, as I said last night, that in terms of ISO 9000 quality ratings, Ontario is the highest jurisdiction in North America. Yes, we agree there is need for change in our apprenticeship program, but we believe the steps you have taken are ultimately going to lead to a diminution of quality which will leave Ontario in a less competitive position.

From a legislative perspective, hearings are extremely important. I'm given to understand that there may be a flicker of hope, that as a result of the persuasiveness of our House leader and of the arguments made by the Liberal caucus in demanding these hearings —

Ms Lankin: Oh, please.

Mr Bradley: And the NDP.

Ms Lankin: Thank you.

Mr Duncan: — and the NDP, the government is indeed contemplating public hearings. I would urge the government, as the Liberal caucus has urged, as my House leader has urged, as we have urged in our speeches, that public hearings are a necessity. Let's give people an opportunity to have real input into this legislation. It's important that as we proceed with this piece of legislation these hearings happen. It's also important, I would suggest to the government, that if you have hearings, it might be a good idea to let us know what's going to be in the regulations as well, so that all the issues can be on the table, so that a full debate can happen, so that the government's full position can be put forward. We look forward to those hearings and welcome the government House leader's —

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Christopherson: I want to begin by picking up again on the important issue of public hearings. It really is a shame that at this point in the evolution of democracy the opposition has to spend so much time and effort asking

for nothing more than the opportunity for people who are affected by this legislation to have their say.

I would remind the government members and I would remind anyone watching this evening of the track record of this government when it comes to public hearings. People will remember Bill 7, not just amendments to the Ontario Labour Relations Act but a completely brand new act in total from front to back, a totally new Ontario Labour Relations Act, a bill that took away successor rights from OPSEU, which you didn't campaign on in the election. It's not like you had a mandate and you could claim that you had the mandate to do it. You didn't tell anybody you were planning to do that to them. They're the only group of workers in the province you did it to.

You made scabs legal again in Ontario, a disgraceful act that has had thousands of workers out on the street and their families without income longer than would ever be necessary because you said to employers, "Not only is it legally okay, but please, please, go ahead and hire scabs to go in and do the jobs of those workers who are out on a picket line fighting to get a decent collective agreement." How many public hearings did you give to a bill that did all of that? None. Not one week, not one day, not one hour.

I would remind members of the government that at the time you rammed that bill through, the bill I just spoke of that did all the things that I've just said, that you rammed through second reading, committee of the whole and third reading in one night — Halloween to be exact. The bill was introduced, I believe, on October 4 and by October 31 it was law. Not one minute — unheard of in the history of Ontario, never before. A Tory, NDP or Liberal government had never changed even a comma in the Ontario Labour Relations Act without serious, meaningful consultation with the Ontario Federation of Labour, the body that represents the labour movement at the provincial level — never done. You rammed that bill through and said, "That's fine. We don't need to hear from anybody."

Bill 26: You not only changed the whole structure of governing in this province by virtue of all the laws that you took out of debate from this place and sent into the secrecy of the cabinet room by making them regulations — a mammoth bill. You tried to ram it through at the end of the year, just before the Christmas break, when you were hoping everybody was watching somewhere else. You tried to ram that through.

I would remind you that Bill 26 also created the Health Services Restructuring Commission, which has wreaked havoc in all our communities, every single community, after your Premier said during the campaign, "Oh, I have no plans to close any hospitals." But you made sure the restructuring commission was closing them for you. You created it, you appointed those people and you're closing those hospitals just as much as the people signing those papers. Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital, for example, in my own community is on the chopping block for that reason. It reached the point where, believe it or not, the Liberals and the NDP actually worked together and hijacked this place.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): No kidding. That's a true story.

Mr Christopherson: You're darned right it's true. We hijacked this place, and why would we do it? It's certainly not because there's any great big love affair between these two parties. It was because it was the only way we could force you to recognize that you had an obligation — a moral obligation, an ethical obligation and a traditional obligation — to allow people to have some kind of say. All it really got at the end of day was a couple of more weeks, but that represented a doubling of what we had before. Even then, there wasn't enough time for people to take in all of what that bill did. You wonder why we stand and spend so much time asking and demanding and pleading — you've got the majority — to give people their fundamental democratic right to be heard.

Bill 99: You promised to give us province-wide public hearings. You gave us six measly days in the middle of summer — unheard of again for a bill that mammoth.

Bill 31: Just a few months ago, before the summer break. That is causing all kinds of chaos in the construction industry that is going to lead to the watering down, if not the elimination, of province-wide agreements. All of that happened in another bill and you didn't give one minute of public hearings to that bill. You rammed it through in the final day, again hoping nobody would pay any attention — it was the final days, just before summer — that you could get away with it. That's exactly what you did. So on this bill we again say to you, you have an obligation. Whether you like working people or not, you owe it to them to have a say on something that affects the young people of our province as fundamentally as Bill 55 does.

1850

The government member for St Catharines-Brock, when he commented earlier, said in terms of my comments in responding to previous speakers that I had it backwards, that no, this wasn't going to hurt the young people, this wasn't going to hurt apprentices; this was going to be good for them. You've said that about every piece of labour legislation you brought into this place. It wasn't true on any of those and it's not true on this one. You have done nothing in this Legislature, in terms of laws that affect working people and their rights and ability to have a decent wage and decent benefits for the work they perform, that hasn't hurt them, and hurt them dramatically.

As we ask questions of the Chair of Management Board about the report in the papers today about the government's possible use of scabs in the upcoming negotiations if there happens to be a strike with OPSEU, I couldn't help but recall that the last time —

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): Point of order, Madam Speaker: I do believe we're supposed to be debating Bill 55, the apprenticeship act. I've heard very few comments from the honourable member that are actually addressing the very important —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'm listening carefully to the member's speech and I'm asking all members to

remember what bill we're debating tonight, but I must tell you that I've heard the member repeatedly come back to that particular bill this evening.

Mr Christopherson: It's important that we understand the context of this bill in terms of what you've done to labour legislation up to this point in time, to understand that you have done nothing to help working people at all in legislation you've introduced, and this is the same thing. I've said to the minister before, who suddenly has gained such arrogance, that she hasn't done nearly enough positive work in this province to acquire that kind of arrogance that she shows in this House day after day, and the contempt she shows for opposition and our rights in this place.

In terms of remembering where we've been, I raise the issue of what happened when we talked about the OPSEU situation and the possible use of scabs, because scabs affect the work world that these apprentices are going into. It led to blood on the streets. That's the truth. There was blood on the streets as a result of Bill 7 and the strike you caused with OPSEU. We told you it would happen at the time and we are telling you now that there's nothing in Bill 55 that's good for young people and good for apprentices.

How can it be good for them that you're going to raise tuition fees? How is that possibly good for young people, who oftentimes barely have enough money to survive? How is that supposed to help anybody? By that theory, they ought to go talk to the seniors who are paying the higher copayments — which is just another word for "user fees." Ask them how that has helped improve the lives of seniors in our province. It hasn't. Increasing the tuition fees on apprentices, introducing them in the first place and raising them to the levels you're probably thinking of, cannot be helpful. It doesn't make common sense that if you charge apprentices more money, somehow their life is better.

What else are you doing in Bill 55? No longer will the legislation state what the wages are going to be. I had some experience of this when I was working at International Harvester and I was an elected labour representative there. We had apprentices under the collective agreement. They had a guarantee through that collective agreement — by the way, the only people who are going to have the same kinds of rights that apprentices have now under the current laws after you pass Bill 55 are people who are lucky enough to have a collective agreement where it spells out the privileges they're entitled to and the rights they're entitled to and the wages they're entitled to. If you don't have a collective agreement and you're thinking of going into an apprenticeship after Bill 55 passes, you're going to lose, because no longer will the law tell employers that you have to pay a certain percentage, depending on what time of the apprenticeship you're in — and it increases with each year of experience, because obviously the employer is getting more benefit.

These apprentices are working on the job; they're performing duties. They're being supervised by journey-people and they're paid a percentage of that journey-

person's wage rate. As the apprentice learns more and can contribute more to the profitability of the firm, they are paid a higher percentage of that journey-person's top wage. It worked; it was a good system; it was a fair system. It gave us the most skilled workforce in the world. We can put our skilled tradespeople up with anyone else in the world. That system served us well, served our young people well, served business well. Now there's no longer a guarantee.

Now what are we going to do? Now we're going to say to employers and apprentices, "You can negotiate what this rate is going to be." Right. So now we've got in most cases a young person who's thankful they've got an opportunity to be an apprentice, and somehow they're expected to go in and negotiate with their employer something close to what the legislation provides them in terms of the wages they get, the percentage of the journey-person's top rate. Come on. The boss there, of course, is worried about the bottom line. That's their job. That's why they're there. That's either why they own the company or why they are management for the company. So of course they're going to go in and keep that rate as low as they think they can get away with. Anybody can see that. It's going to result in apprentices making less money.

All the benefits to changes you make go to those who already have, and those who are on the weaker end of the equation get less again. In this case you're going after the vulnerability of apprentices who, quite frankly, at the beginning of their apprenticeship, have little or no bargaining capacity. If you've got an unskilled worker walking through the door, how do you leverage that against the next person behind you who also has no skills, because that's why they're in an apprenticeship. So it's going to be cap in hand, "Please, sir, pay me a decent wage for the work I'm doing." That's what you're doing. That's the reality of taking it out of the law, that has served us so well, that says, "You will pay this percentage at this point in an apprenticeship training period."

That fits with you folks, doesn't it? Anything that lowers wages, lowers the value of labour, whether it's public sector or private sector. That's why you did what you did to OPSEU; that's why you've done to municipalities what you have in terms of putting them into financial constraints in terms of how it affects CUPE; that's why you've made scabs legal again, so in the private sector they can negotiate down wages and benefits of workers.

That's what you're doing. You do it at the same time that you stand up and say that you care about young people, that you care about skilled trades. You really are good at the words, but anybody who's living out there under your laws, where it affects them or their family members, knows that it's empty words.

I speak of the pride that our skilled trades have in Ontario. I want to say to you that they take as much pride in their profession as most of us should as elected representatives, certainly as the good doctor across the way takes in his profession, and any lawyers who are sitting over there. You take pride in your profession, you take

pride in the job you do because of the years it took you to learn that job, learn the skill. You apply yourself. You sacrifice a lot of your life to make sure you are a professional.

Our skilled tradespeople in Ontario take just as much pride as any of you in terms of the careers you currently have or those you've had before. Why? Because they know that when they compare their skills and ability and the kind of craftsmanship and the kind of work and the kind of safety they can bring to their job — because how they do their job has a lot to do with how safe our buildings are, how safe our electrical systems are, how safe our bridges are. They're a key part of this, and one of the things you're going to change is one of the cornerstones of creating that kind of pride and that kind of skill and that kind of public safety. I think someone who's repairing a large truck on the highway has as much to do with safety as anybody else, for obvious reasons.

1900 What are you going to do? You're going to provide guidelines. Here we go again with guidelines, self-reliance, self-regulating. Everything is over to the industry because you're just convinced they'll do a good job. You're going to provide guidelines about the ratio of journeypersons to apprentices, and instead of saying very clearly in legislation, "Thou shalt have, in any given trade, X number of journeypersons per apprentice," you're going to replace that with, "Gee, friends," — and they are your friends — "we'd really appreciate if you'd sort of keep an eye on the ratio thing so it doesn't get too far out of whack, if you could just sort of take care of that."

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Come to my fundraiser.

Mr Christopherson: Yes, "We'll talk about it later at my fundraiser next week."

Ms Lankin: Nudge, nudge, wink, wink.

Mr Christopherson: My colleague from Beaches says, "Nudge, nudge, wink, wink." That's what's going to happen.

Again, I was there. I know how this works. The reason you have these kinds of ratios is that people are busy, they're working hard. Those journeypersons are busy, and they're performing their skill. They're applying their knowledge on the job, and at the same time they're expected to keep an eye — they and their colleagues — on these apprentices, both to make sure they're doing the job correctly and learning the right kind of procedures and methods so they'll be good, skilled tradespersons and also so the job site is safe. If they're installing gas pipes in a public building, we want to make sure — every one of us — that job is done safely and properly.

If you leave to the whim of employers what the ratio will be, at the end of the day we're going to water down the skill of those apprentices, because there won't be as many journeypersons around them. There will be more apprentices around, and there will be fewer journeypersons.

It's like — I don't know, Doc, let me ask you. In my mind, it would be like lopping off a year of med school

and saying, "Well, you don't need that much concentration; you can get away with a year less." If you've got fewer tradespeople and journeypeople around you to give you hands-on and you've got other apprentices around you, you're not going to learn as much. The job won't be as thorough, the job won't be as safe.

I'm wrapping up because we only get 20 minutes. You've cut back the democracy in this place.

If you disagree with that so much and you think that I and the others are so wrong, then take it out to public hearings. Come on out for public hearings and really come and beat us up. Show us where we're so wrong. I say the opposite is true. Let us get out there and talk to the people who know this business, and they'll prove that you're the ones who are wrong with this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): I'm pleased to make a few comments to the member for Hamilton Centre. I agree with some of the things he said.

Mr Christopherson: Do you want to reconsider?

Mr Carroll: I don't agree quite that much.

I agree with the fact that we have the best-trained workforce. I agree with the fact that our tradespeople do quality work and they should feel proud. I agree with the fact that safety is important and we must protect safety in the workplace. The thing I don't agree with is when he tells us that our current system has served our young people well. It has not served our young people well. As a result of that, we have an enormous number of young people who in fact do not have the skills and cannot find the ability to get the skills.

He talked about an unskilled person having no bargaining power. Of course they have no bargaining power — that's the problem — because they're unskilled. We need to give them the skills through an apprenticeship program so that they in fact have some bargaining power so that when they come to the workforce they can say to the employer: "I have these skills. They're documented in my apprenticeship. I now command so much money." Our old system has not served our young people well, and we need to change that.

He talked about there being fewer journeypersons around. Maybe there will be, but only for a short period of time because we need to train some more. The object of the game here is to train some more people in the skilled trades. We have a shortage now. I'm sure he's aware of the fact that we have a shortage, so I'm surprised at him arguing against a plan that is designed to create more skilled workers and more skilled labourers. When they have those skills and they can then come to the workforce, his unions can sign them on and can get them to pay their union dues and can bargain on their behalf, but the first thing we need to do is train them so they have some bargaining power and they can find productive work.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I would just like to concur with the speech from the member for Hamilton Centre. He always talks about these kinds of issues in a very passionate and forceful way.

The area I would like to talk about very briefly is this whole notion of tuition fees and tuitions for training.

Hon Mrs Ecker: We are debating apprenticeship.

Ms Lankin: A part of the bill is to set out tuition fees, Janet. Read your briefing note.

Mr Gerretsen: Maybe if the minister would read the bill before coming into the House and starting to heckle people, then she would know a little bit more about it rather than accusing other people of not having read the bill.

It seems to me that just about everything this government does is making it harder for people who are trying to advance their education in one way or another, trying to advance their life skills and their educational skills. They're making it tougher and tougher. We've seen it in the adult education area, where whole groups of people will no longer be eligible for adult education. You can deny it, but come to my school board and talk to some of the people in their 20s there who are no longer able to take adult education courses currently because the funding is rapidly disappearing. You're doing exactly the same thing here.

We all know it's tough to get apprentices into a program. One of the reasons is the fact that labour rates frequently are quite a bit higher or just about at the apprenticeship level. How are you going to get young workers interested in actually learning a trade, which is going to take them a certain period of time while they're apprentices, when at the same time you're demanding tuition fees from them? Why are we making it tougher on young people in this province to in effect better themselves?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I want to congratulate my colleague the member for Hamilton Centre for laying out quite clearly what this is all about. This has nothing to do with trying to provide more training opportunities for young people through apprenticeship programs. That's utter nonsense. That's not what this is all about.

It's clear the legislation, when you read it, is basically about deregulating the wage structure within the apprenticeship program, deregulating the ratios of how many apprentices to journeymen so that we can have far more apprentices, unsupervised, on their own, doing their own thing, not being properly supervised by journeymen and, more importantly, it's about multi-skilling.

This is Mike Harris's hand-off to Sears Canada. That's the way I see it. Sears wants to be able to sell somebody an air conditioner and have it installed in their house by one multi-skilled person rather than having people who are qualified to do the work do the work that needs to be done.

Basically what he's doing is a hand-off to the private sector, saying: "You can fragment the skills. The air conditioning people, fragment out part of that skill so that we're able to train that person also to do a little bit of electrical, a little bit of mechanical and maybe a little bit of welding to go with it so you can have one person do all of the work." In the end, if let's say you even agreed that was a good idea, it means less workers. Less workers,

worse economy. But what scares me is that you're going to end up in a situation where you're going to have people who are unqualified in industry doing things that are quite dangerous.

I would suggest to the parliamentary assistant, who's a veterinarian, the following: How would he feel, and where would that leave us, if we were to deskill the veterinarians in this province, if we were to hand off that only certain vets can deal with one half of the horse and the other veterinarians can deal with the other half of the horse? I wonder what side of the horse the member for Northumberland would be working on if we were to deskill his set. I would suggest his skills would be towards the back end of the horse because this is where this legislation is coming from and it should be put real quick in the back end of a horse.

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Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's nice of you to mention the profession of veterinary medicine. I can tell you that we don't have unions; it's not necessary. What we have is a college, to which we're required to belong to get a licence. The lobby group is a volunteer organization and members belong to it because they want to, because it's a worthwhile organization. If unions were in the same role, that their members wanted to belong rather than had to, it would raise tremendously their credibility in the eyes of the public in general.

I've heard the member for Hamilton Centre talk a lot about scabs and I can only assume that "scabs" is an acronym for "special citizens assisting bosses." I have no idea where else "scabs" might have come from but it just has to be an acronym such as that.

I hear the members of the NDP talking an awful lot about apprentices getting less money and that people just can't take less money, that they don't want to. As a matter of fact, what people in this country are happy for is a job. That's why the so-called term you use of scabs going across the picket line — they're just happy to have a job. It's very satisfying to have a job in this country.

You say that this government has done nothing to help workers. What did you do to help workers? You managed to create, net, minus 10,000 jobs. We have created approximately 400,000 jobs. Why? Because we've stimulated the economy, we've cut the income tax by some 30% in Ontario, we've cut corporate taxes and we've cut payroll taxes such as the employer health tax. That's what's stimulated the economy and created the close to 400,000 jobs. We have not come along in the style of an NDP government and lost some 10,000 jobs as your government ended up doing.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: You would know, and I need your guidance in this, the standing orders are quite clear, that when members of the House are speaking here they have to be truthful and make sure that everything they say is not a falsehood. I would wonder how you allowed that former speech, considering everything he said was untrue.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Cochrane South, you're out of order. I have to ask you to withdraw that.

Mr Bisson: Withdraw what part? I didn't hear you, sorry.

The Acting Speaker: You know what you said and I ask you to withdraw it.

Mr Bisson: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Christopherson: I thank my colleagues for at least the interest in responding, if I'm not all that enchanted with the comments themselves.

I would point out to the parliamentary assistant, the member for Northumberland, two things. One is that you go talk to the workers at Provincial Papers or de Havilland and ask them about the approach of our government in terms of maintaining and creating jobs versus the approach you're taking and we'll see what they have to say.

I know there are an awful lot of people who care about labour laws in this province who are watching this debate. I would urge them to pay particular attention to the argument coming from the parliamentary assistant, because when he talks about volunteer organizations, he's talking about eliminating the Rand formula. Make no mistake about it: Any kind of re-elected Tory government means the elimination of the Rand formula, and that means the elimination of the modern-day labour movement, and it means the elimination of the ability to have decent wages and decent benefits, and he knows it. People ought to read that directly into what he said there.

Let me also thank the members for Cochrane South and Kingston and The Islands.

I want to spend a moment on the comments of the member from Chatham. He kept talking about training and he really sort of typified the spin you're putting on this, that this is going to create more apprentices and you're going to create more training and that whole line. The reality is that although it sounds the same as when the Minister of the Environment —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Stop the clock. Take your seat. I would ask the government members to come to order, please. I couldn't hear the member. Thank you. Start the clock, please.

Mr Christopherson: I would mention to people that just like when the Minister of the Environment stands up and says the environment is better because we've improved the legislation, when the Minister of Education stands up and says we've made things better in terms of education and we support teachers and all that garbage, the fact of the matter is that anybody who's in those worlds knows that the opposite is true, and the opposite is true in terms of how this is going to hurt apprentices.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): There is one thing that the member for Hamilton Centre and I would agree upon, and that is that the member for Chatham-Kent I think has sized up this issue quite nicely in his two minutes of response: that the apprenticeship system as we know it over the years has not produced the total results in Ontario that we need. We

simply do not have enough people becoming involved in the apprenticeship system and gaining the skills we need within our economy in Ontario.

You can argue that one way or another, and this goes back years and years — it goes back decades — way before I was ever involved in education or the apprenticeship system, but people would say that we need skilled workers in certain trades in Ontario. Where were they coming from? Not enough of them were coming from Ontario. In many cases we went abroad, and people from overseas, from Europe, were required to come into Ontario to provide the skills in our economy because within our own borders we didn't seem to have a system that trained the people, that produced the people we need within our economy.

The people of Ontario know this is a basic fact. This is a basic fact of life. We've been well served by many people who have come from abroad and who indeed have become citizens of Canada and made wonderful contributions to our economy and to our country in many different ways. Nevertheless, should we not have a system within our own boundaries that gives the opportunities to our young people to have the skills that are in demand? Do we not owe it to our young people to develop a system that does that? I think that's what the member for Chatham-Kent is saying and that's exactly what we're doing.

Mr Christopherson: It's not what you're doing.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Hamilton Centre, come to order.

Hon David Johnson: The member for Kingston and The Islands made a comment with regard to the funding. I will say that he's absolutely right to raise the funding issue as well. I was a little busy here and I didn't catch all of his comments, but I'm sure he was alluding to his concern that over the last three years, and up into the middle of next year, the federal government has reduced its funding from \$42 million a year in the apprenticeship program in Ontario to zero. That must have been what the member for Kingston and The Islands was referring to. I'm sure that's what he was referring to.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The minister knows quite well I was not talking about funding. I was talking about tuition.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, that is not a point of order.

Hon David Johnson: I didn't quite hear what the member was referring to. Probably what he was referring to then was that during that same period of time, the provincial government increased its allocation of funds to the apprenticeship program. Or perhaps —

Mr Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: I have just indicated to the minister that I did not talk about the funding, so he should —

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. Perhaps later you'll get the opportunity to correct your record.

Hon David Johnson: If it wasn't the federal reduction or the provincial increase to the apprenticeship program, then maybe he was referring to the overall federal reduc-

tion of \$2.4 billion in health, social and education programs in Ontario. That's probably what he was referring to.

The apprenticeship program is part of an overall training program that we are developing in Ontario, so that the apprenticeship program —

Mr Bradley: Oh, the amount you're throwing away on the tax cut to the rich.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Member for Scarborough-Ellesmere, member for St Catharines, come to order.

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Hon David Johnson: The apprenticeship program —
Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Hon David Johnson: Can we have a little order from the member for St Catharines?

The apprenticeship program is part of an overall screening program in Ontario. I would commend to the members on both sides of the House a brochure we have released entitled Better Skills, More Jobs: Ontario's Plan for Tomorrow's Job Market. This brochure outlines the vision of the province of Ontario to train, with the new integrated system, 750,000 people a year under a labour market agreement with the federal government.

The member for St Catharines and the member for Fort William the other day raised the issue of, have we been able to come to an agreement with the federal government, and the answer is no. The federal government has not come to the table to deal with Ontario.

Mr Gerretsen: Why not? Everybody else has.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, come to order.

Hon David Johnson: I would seek the support of the members opposite to insist that the federal government, your colleagues, allow Ontario to have the same sort of arrangements that the other provinces have had. Frankly, it's a travesty that the federal government has been willing to negotiate deals with all of the other provinces but will not negotiate a deal with Ontario. I'm sure it couldn't have anything to do with the fact that they have 101 members in Ontario and enjoy the opportunity for the ribbon-cutting ceremonies etc associated with their portion of the training. I'm sure it would have nothing to do with that. I feel quite certain, now that the provincial Liberals are aware of this problem that we face, they will fight with us, will fight arm in arm with the federal government to get the same kind of labour market agreement that the other provinces have.

This will be important because within the context of an integrated agreement, we can deal with all the training needs of the people of Ontario in a reasonable fashion, avoid the duplication and overlap that exist in the programs and put the proper emphasis on all the training programs, including apprenticeship and other skills training, literacy, on-the-job training, all the various aspects that will be needed.

I'm very pleased that there's been a great deal of consultation. The issue of consultation has arisen. There's been a great deal of consultation. This consultation, I must stay, predates me considerably, but even this year there have been six meetings, for example, with the Council of Ontario Construction Associations, COCA; three meetings with the Ontario Federation of Labour; a meeting with the Canadian Auto Workers union; meetings with the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association —

Mr Christopherson: The OFL? You didn't have any meaningful discussion with them.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Hamilton Centre, come to order.

Hon David Johnson: — five meetings with the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council, and on and on it goes, meetings this year and many meetings before this.

Ms Lankin: After you wrote the legislation. "This is our consultation. This is what we're going to do."

The Acting Speaker: Member for Beaches-Woodbine, come to order.

Hon David Johnson: Notwithstanding that, this government certainly does not have any objection to public hearings. I imagine these public hearings will be arranged with the House leaders' office. I will certainly be looking forward to public hearings across the province.

Ms Lankin: Is that a commitment? There will be public hearings?

Hon David Johnson: Absolutely. We are most interested in continuing dialogue with the people of Ontario, as we are on all pieces of legislation. We're most anxious to carry on the consultation process, most anxious to carry on with the public hearing process.

Mr Christopherson: What happened with Bill 7? What happened with 26? What happened with 31?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Hamilton Centre, come to order.

Hon David Johnson: I'm very confident that the House leaders will be able to arrange such a public hearing process and I certainly look forward to it.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Etobicoke-Humber, come to order.

Hon David Johnson: I would like to say that there's a good deal of support for moving ahead and I think we'll see that support at public hearings. We've certainly seen that support through the public consultation process. I know, for example, that the president of the Canadian Tooling Manufacturers' Association is in full support of Bill 55 and looks forward to continuing involvement. Charles Greco, the chair and president of the Ontario Hostelry Institute, not only supports Ontario's apprenticeship system, but it moves beyond that and is the underpinning of building blocks for job creation in this province. You know that the hospitality sector is the second-largest employer in Ontario, and they are in full support of moving ahead. The Ontario Trucking Association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, COCA, the Labourers' International Union of North America, these

are all organizations concerned about the adequate supply of well-trained individuals and giving our young people opportunities to strengthen their skills and participate in the economy of Ontario.

Our goal is to double the number of apprentices coming into the system. Currently we have, unfortunately, only about 11,000 a year coming into the system. Our goal is to double that to 22,000. Through this bill and other measures, I believe we can reach that goal. There are difficulties that the current legislation has. Bear in mind that the current legislation was put together in 1964. That means it's over 30 years old, and a lot has changed in the last 30 years. We need to deal with the realities of 1998.

The current legislation requires an apprentice, for example, to spend a specified amount of time. It does not speak to performance measures, as an example. We believe that apprentices and their workers and their employers deserve better than that. So we intend to work with the industry to create a more rigorous training system, a system in which apprentices tackle clear learning benchmarks that are set by the employers and the workers in that trade. That is a key proposal of the approach, that the industry be instrumental in determining what makes most sense for that particular industry. By the industry, I'm not only talking about the employer but the workers. The unions, the employees are involved through the provincial advisory committees and they will have a say —

Mr Christopherson: Why do you oppose it if it's so wonderful?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Hamilton Centre, come to order.

Hon David Johnson: These committees have been asking for more authority, more say. They are in support of more authority and more say.

Mr Gerretsen: Why do you oppose it if it's so wonderful?

The Acting Speaker: Order, member for Kingston and The Islands.

Hon David Johnson: This is what we have determined through the consultations and this will assist their industry in having more flexibility to deal with their particular situation.

Mr Bradley: I remember when he was mayor he always used to tell the truth.

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat for a moment. Member for St Catharines, you have to withdraw that.

Mr Bradley: I simply said whenever he was mayor —

The Acting Speaker: Member for St Catharines, just withdraw it.

Mr Bradley: I withdraw that he always told the truth —

The Acting Speaker: Just withdraw it.

Mr Bradley: There it is. I did.

Hon David Johnson: There are some particular issues that have been raised. I can't possibly deal with all of them.

Interjections.

Hon David Johnson: It's a little hard to concentrate in here with the din. Can we have some order?

The Acting Speaker: Just take your seat for a moment. To the member for Scarborough-Ellesmere, don't tell me how to do my job. I would ask all people to come to order, from all sides of the House. The minister is right: There's a lot of noise, there is a din. And don't you tell me how to do my job again. Thank you.

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Hon David Johnson: One concern is with regard to the ratios. The provincial advisory committees feel they're in a position to offer advice in terms of the most appropriate ratios within their organizations. This is a safety issue; this is a quality issue. These are the people who are best positioned to understand the needs within their particular industry. These are the employers, the workers, union members and non-union members who are involved and who understand within their particular industry what are the appropriate ratios.

The current regulations, for example, although they establish ratios, do not prevent apprentices from working on one site and the journeypeople on another site or do not prevent apprentices working one shift and the journeypeople working on another shift. There is no assurance of quality, there is no assurance of safety, and we are going to fix that. The way we're going to fix that is by having confidence in the knowledge and ability of the people in the industry.

Obviously the members opposite feel they know what's best for each and every one of the numerous industries in the province. I guess they know what's best for the ironworkers and the tool and die makers and the cooks and bakers and all the different industries, but there's obviously a difference of opinion. We feel the industries themselves, the workers and the employers in the tool and die industry, in the hospitality industry, are the people who know what makes sense in their industries. These are the people who can establish the rules and regulations for us, what makes sense to attract more people into their industry, to attract more employers to train. That's what the whole approach will be. We respect their opinions and we will give their opinions more authority and more clout under the new set-up.

There are some other myths that have been posed in regard to the situation. One is that the minimum age requirement will be changed. In fact, the minimum age requirement of grade 10 is not in the current legislation; it is in the regulations. We will be making no change to the legislation with regard to grade 10. There's a concern with regard to the minimum age. The minimum age will certainly remain at 16. Bill 55 will ensure that 16 is the minimum age for an apprentice to sign a training agreement. So these myths have been spun out there in terms of discrediting the legislation, but I think we'll find as we go through the public hearings and continue consultation that they have been dealt with in a satisfactory fashion.

I see I'm down to two minutes. I'll only say that my experience — and I've had a couple of excellent experiences recently, in the last several months, with regard to

the apprenticeship program in terms of an auto parts manufacturer in Newmarket. This auto parts manufacturer is a small firm with about 100 people, training a number of apprentices. They can't get enough skilled people into that plant, which is creating auto parts in Ontario, so much so that the apprentices, after five years, were making about \$70,000 a year in this plant. Four of them were actually making over \$70,000 a year after five years and some of them were making over \$100,000 a year because of all the overtime they had to put in, because there is a shortage of skilled employees.

There are wonderful opportunities in the tool and die industry, wonderful opportunities in the automotive parts manufacturing field, where some 40% of the skilled people in that industry will be retiring over the next five or six years.

We have a big job to do in terms of improving the skills in the province, in terms of meeting the needs of the employers in the province. This bill will allow the flexibility to do it. This bill will be the first update of the apprenticeship bill in 30 years. This bill will call upon the people who are in the industry, who have the skills and the knowledge, to play a higher profile to assist in creating those extra-skilled positions and those jobs.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): Yet again the minister proves that this government is really determined to water things down in Ontario. By watering it down, you're watering down the standards. You're ensuring that we're not getting the kind of highly skilled tradespersons we need in Ontario.

Mr Bradley: Mississippi North.

Mr Cordiano: Thank you.

Mr Bisson: You heard that?

Mr Cordiano: That was an unqualified support for what I was saying. Of course, one wonders if this is not the same thing that's being done over and over again. It's the same formula you're using. You're doing it to our schools. You're doing it to our hospitals. You're doing it in every aspect in our lives in Ontario.

But what's been the hallmark of this province and its success around the manufacturing sector has been the fact that we've had very highly skilled tradespersons. We've had the highest level of training. We've had a sector that others have looked to with envy because we had that high level of skills in the province.

What you're doing with this apprenticeship program is not making it possible for people to enter into these fields, not making certain that we are improving accessibility, that we're going to get even better, more highly trained, skilled persons. This bill fails to do that. This bill ensures that in fact we will not get that high level of skilled tradesperson, and that's why I think you're getting such objections to it from groups out there.

I understand that there's a need for a greater number of people to enter into these skilled workplaces and into these trades. There's no doubt that is an ongoing concern, but change for the sake of change which makes things worse is not acceptable in Ontario.

Mr Christopherson: In response to the minister's comments, first of all, in part of your remarks, Minister, you said that you want to respect the opinions of people who are affected by this, and yet earlier in your speech you talked about consultations and the fact that you'd met with so many groups.

The reality is that when you started to talk with any kind of seriousness, or wanted to, with the Ontario Federation of Labour, you'd already written the bill. The bill was already written. That's not consultation. That's just to give you the ability to stand up and read off a piece of paper, just as you did, "I had X number of meetings." That's not consultation, calling people in and saying, "I've already written the bill, but what have you got to say?" That's not the way we do things. At least it's certainly not the way that things used to be done under all three parties in the past. Only under this weird creation of Reform-Atories we've got over here do we get into this kind of bizarre world.

All of the things that you did talk about, you know what you didn't talk about? You didn't talk about the tuition fees. You didn't talk about that. You didn't answer those accusations, that that was going to be hurting apprentices, and answer how that was supposed to be helpful to apprentices.

You didn't talk about the ratios. Those ratios are crucial to maintaining the skills level of our journeypeople that you and your colleagues stand up and so blithely say you care about. Without those ratios we will not have the same quality and high-calibre tradespeople we now have, period. We won't.

You didn't talk about the fact that apprentices' wages are going to be less. That's just a sop to your business friends so they can have cheaper labour. That's all that is. You didn't address that, about the fact that it's your friends who get cheap labour and those apprentices get less income.

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Mr Froese: I would like to do something a little bit different than the opposition do when they just criticize and really don't come with any alternatives. I'd like to commend and thank the minister for his concern for our young people in Ontario. We're looking at how best we can educate our young people, how best we can train our young people, and looking at ways to ensure that our young people get the training and the skills needed to get well-paid jobs and, at the same time, meet the ever-growing skills shortages in many sectors of our economy today.

I'd like to commend the minister for his balanced approach, especially in this bill. He's done that in a number of areas in the Ministry of Education, but when we talk about the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, having flexible time with some of the restrictions that are there, in doing that, the apprentices will be able to go through their training at their own speed rather than at a set format, and keeping pace with the changing times as well, which will provide greater flexibility for employers to introduce new occupations under the apprenticeship program.

He mentioned how he's worked with the industry, and that's great, with the employers and the employees.

To continue the funding, the \$42 million that we're doing — the member for Lawrence talked about funding. He should go back to his Liberal cousins in Ottawa. They took the funding away from this program.

Mr Bradley: As I was saying of the Minister of Education, at one time I used to enjoy his repartee, when he was the mayor of East York. I found him in those days to be an individual who was accurate in the comments that he made at all times, I thought. Now that he's become Minister of Education, he is compelled to provide the information which is provided by people such as Guy Giorno and the other backroom boys in the government.

Hon Mrs Ecker: What do you have about Guy Giorno? Are you jealous? You keep mentioning his name.

Mr Bradley: I keep mentioning the name of the king of the backroom boys because I want to point out to the people of this province that really the decisions are made largely with the advisers to the Premier of this province. If you quietly canvass some of your members who have not made it to the cabinet yet, you'll find out that they agree that the non-elected people who advise the Premier have far too much influence on this government. I don't expect they're going to get up and say that. In fact, I won't invite them to say it.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, order. Come to order.

Mr Bradley: But they know very well that much more power resides in the unelected people, the whiz kids in the Premier's office —

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): It must really have rankled you that Peterson's only adviser was his wife.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kitchener.

Mr Bradley: — than reside in the caucus. I think the Premier would be far wiser to consult individual members of the caucus rather than simply having Guy Giorno and other whiz kids provide notes for various ministers to read in this House containing information which I consider to be inaccurate information, which I think is quite legal to say in this House.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon David Johnson: It's with some sadness that I listen to the comments from the member for St Catharines, who is an individual I've always had a great deal of respect for even up to this very moment. But I think he does a discredit to the many people who have been involved in developing this approach to apprenticeship, which has involved consultations with a huge number of different groups and organizations across Ontario. To suggest that any one individual has had an undue influence on this I think does a discredit to the involvement of people from the automotive parts association or the Council of Ontario Construction Associations or indeed the Canadian Auto Workers union or so many other individuals across the province.

The hospitality industry is another one I mention in particular, having attended at the Royal York, seeing some

of the young people training in the kitchens of the Royal York Hotel.

This is a sincere attempt to bring the apprenticeship system up to date. The member for St Catharines-Brock mentioned new occupations, and I just have a couple of examples: horticulturist, landscaper, greenskeeper is a new apprenticeship which was developed in 1986; network cabling specialist, developed just last year; information technology support analyst, help desk, developed about three years ago. These are indications of how our economy is changing, how our skills needs are changing, how our young people need the advantage of a more flexible system, how we need input from people across Ontario, people involved in these industries, to help us develop the kinds of approaches and programs.

Those are the real issues in this bill. That's why we're proud of this bill and intending to proceed with it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bradley: I notice that under the new rules written by Guy Giorno and others, the debate has now shrunk so that individuals who wish to speak on the bill are not allowed even 20 minutes, which is less than the half-hour they used to have, but 10 minutes. You can see how the government wishes to limit and shrink debate on all important legislation. It's unfortunate that more people in this province are not aware of that and that editorialists find it to be boring stuff to deal with.

In the limited 10 minutes that I have, I must say to the minister that I think the consultations are taking place tonight at the big Conservative fundraiser that is being held, where the Premier is attending. While he is speaking about the apprenticeship program and receiving the thanks of those who think they're now going to get lower-wage people to work for them in their industry, I'm wondering if he's going to be speaking to the executives of the oil companies in this province about the fact that they have again raised gasoline prices for the long weekend. I heard the Premier huffing and puffing in this House about what he was going to do, but when it comes down to calling them on the carpet, the only carpet they're on is the carpet at the fundraiser, and then everybody is back-slapping. I'll be interested to hear tomorrow from anybody who was at the fundraiser tonight whether the Premier calls to account the executives of the oil companies who just jacked up the gas prices in this province. But that is only peripheral to this bill. I want to deal with the provisions of this bill and what I'm concerned about.

First of all, overall the policies of this government, particularly as they relate to the employment force in Ontario, seem to want to make this province Mississippi North. In other words, instead of looking at a common denominator which is high, where we have highly skilled individuals who are able to obtain remuneration which allows them to raise their families and perhaps have some of the amenities that others have in the province, this government seems to want to crush that group and have a large number of people who are paid very little while the wealthiest people get wealthier because of that. That's most unfortunate, because I think we want to see every-

body have that opportunity, not simply have somebody stand on somebody else's head in order to step up. I think we like to see people work together so that we have as many people as possible who are making those good wages and those good salaries in this province and are allowed to be trained.

Apprenticeship training is something we're all concerned about, quite obviously. I think we are always seeking answers which are going to allow more and more people into the workforce with the skills we hope they can acquire. There's no question about it, if you look at the demographics in some specific areas, we find that we're going to need a significant number of skilled people. I recognize that by the time they get into industry particularly, there are going to be changes in terms of automation that take place that may require fewer of those individuals. There are some people who applaud that and say, "That's progress, that's great stuff; we've downsized," or as they would say, "We've right-sized and we've shoved these people out the door while the profits go higher." That's one of the problems we've described from this side of the House.

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First of all, I should say that people understand. They don't like it and they feel saddened by it, but they understand that when a corporation is not making money or is losing money, the workforce is likely to shrink, that there's likely to be a situation where there are going to be layoffs. Nobody likes to see that but they understand it. What they don't understand and what they reject is those businesses which make unprecedented profits while they're rolling the bodies out into the street, the bodies being those who are no longer needed to perform services and work within that company.

I remember the Premier was attending a conference in Davos, Switzerland. The people who were there, some of the brightest people in terms of business and economics in the world, got together and one of the things they said they had to address was exactly that problem.

I see it in the banks now, for instance, where more and more the banks want us to use the machines. They're not going to need many apprentices in the bank for anything, if they ever needed apprentices in the bank, because they constantly pressure us to use the banking machines. They shrink the hours in which you can get at live employees in the bank, to deal with them, to talk to them, and they tell everybody, "If you go to the automated teller machine, it's much cheaper."

I know there are some people on the other side who think this is great stuff. It allows for higher and higher profits because there are fewer and fewer workers. But I ask the question, where are people going to work then? Not everybody can be out there in the stock market as a stock broker. Not everybody can be a member of the Legislature. The number of opportunities that are going to be there, particularly for people who don't have a privileged position where they know somebody so they can get a good job, or who don't have a high level of education for one reason or another, those people are going to be placed

at a distinct disadvantage. Does this bill help those people? I don't think it does.

We have to have an emphasis on apprenticeship training. I think some of the members who have debated this bill in the House have made this point and it's a very valid point. But I don't think we should ever devalue work that is done with people's hands. Just because we happen to have a white collar or have a job where we work not with our hands in terms of manual work, it doesn't mean that kind of work should be demeaned in any way. It's been unfortunate over the years to watch people channel people into areas where they feel everybody is going to be a doctor or a lawyer or a political representative or some job where they don't have to work within an industrial setting. That's wrong. There are many skills that are needed out there, there are good jobs out there, and what we want our apprenticeship program to do is to allow as many people as possible to acquire those skills.

What this bill seems to be doing is lowering many of the standards, and that's standard practice with this government in so many areas. That's why I said what you want is Mississippi North. In some of the southern United States, in the sunbelt down there, people will say: "Isn't that great? They're leaving the north and going to the south." But of course the labour laws are such that they've diminished most workers' rights in many of those states. They have brought about conditions where people can hardly make a decent living at many of the jobs that are there. I want everybody in this province to have a chance to make that kind of decent living. That's why I think if we could develop an apprenticeship program that would bring about those skills for those folks, that would be great.

In terms of hearings, we should have hearings. We had a meeting this morning of the House leaders and it appears the government House leader has now conceded. The two opposition parties made representations to the government for hearings and we said, "Not just here in Toronto and not just when the House is sitting, but let's go across the province." There may well be a period of time in the month of November where we'll be able to have those hearings so that people who have all kinds of views may express them. That's the best way of dealing with legislation. But the hearings are more meaningful if the government hasn't made up its mind. If the hearings are only tonight at the fundraiser, where the people who are there are going to have the ear of the government, or at the Cornerstone Club that the member for Kingston and The Islands mentioned, where you pay \$500 to join the club and then \$350 and you have direct access to decision-making, to decisions where the speakers are —

Mr Wettlaufer: Come on, Jimmy, tell everyone that yours is \$1,000.

Mr Bradley: Here we have a situation in Ontario, under the jurisdiction of the provincial government — the member for Kitchener can run federally if he wants to; he's now in the provincial House — where the consultation that will take place on legislation of this kind will in fact be the people who paid \$850 in order to be able to get

together with the ministers intimately and with the policy advisers to make decisions, as it says. So I'm glad to see that there's a possibility there will be hearings across the province.

I want to say lastly that I'm very concerned about the component that allows for tuition fees. That's because, once again, this becomes a block to some people being able to take part. Those who have the money will be able to pay the tuition fees; those who do not, have two courses of action: They either have to incur debt as they borrow to be able to do this or, second, they will have to give up the opportunity to take advantage of an apprenticeship program. If an apprenticeship program is going to be successful, it must have maximum accessibility. The tuition provision you're building into this bill will not allow for that kind of accessibility.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments.

Ms Lankin: I'm pleased to respond to the member for St Catharines. In particular, I want to talk about the issue of consultation and the issue of the public hearings. I was glad to hear the minister say in his comments that he thought there probably would be public hearings, and I understand from the House leader of the Liberal Party and today from our whip, who attended the House leaders' meeting, that the government House leader indicated there probably would be public hearings.

I wish we could get to the point where someone would say, "Yes, there will be, and we agree to travel and we agree to this many centres." The sort of games-playing going on that continues the debate on this is only because the government wants to bring in time allocation and control all the pieces of this. They don't care. They're going to force it through time allocation anyway. I wish we could get to that point; there would be some surety around it.

With respect to consultation, the member for St Catharines is quite right. If this is an empty process in which you're not going to really listen to people, you have to question some of the comments the minister made about how open they are to hearing from people and to the process of consultation. In listening to the remarks tonight from the member for St Catharines and from the minister, to the minister, you didn't address any of the issues of concern that have been raised. Many of the points you brought forward might be things that members of the opposition actually agree with, for example, the addition of some new occupations. We agree that the bill is out of date and that updating it is probably a good thing. No disagreement there.

But the issues of concern we raised with respect to tuition fees, you didn't respond to. The issues with respect to the ratios between journeypersons and apprentices, you didn't respond to. The issue with respect to whether or not employers will have to pay fair wages or whether or not they will abuse this as cheap labour, you didn't respond to. If you don't respond to them through the public hearings as well, it will be, once again, simply a sham.

Mr Froese: It is a pleasure to speak about or talk about or say something about what the member for St

Catharines talked about. If it sounds like I'm talking in so many words and there's not really any substance to what I'm saying, I guess I'm doing this the same way the member for St Catharines does. He has a great ability to talk about nothing. Madam Speaker, you certainly have given him a lot of flexibility in talking about the apprenticeship bill.

I must commend him, because this is probably one of the few times that I've really heard him say something about the bill. But I wish he would have talked about the need to update the apprenticeship act, the old one, to update legislation that has not been updated for 30 years, has not been touched. It's really outdated. There needs to be change to meet the needs of what's happening in the workplace in 1998.

He didn't talk about the stronger role for the industry or more flexible time restrictions, allowing apprentices to do things at their own pace rather than on a restricted schedule. He didn't talk about expanding apprenticeship training to new trades — I wish he had talked about that — or a more flexible, accountable system. He didn't talk about industry setting the education standards, not government. He didn't talk about what his party is doing in Ottawa. He always talks about not enough funding. His own party in Ottawa has cut the funding for apprenticeship programs. I'd like to know what he's going to do to help the young people. Is he going to go to Ottawa to get those funds reinstated so that the young people of this province will have the funding to ensure that they get jobs?

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Mr Colle: I'd like to stand and thank the member for St Catharines for his usual insightful analysis and basic dissection of bills. He has certainly an experienced and, as I said, very insightful view of most things. The critical point he made is that there is, you might say, an under-rated importance given to this whole field of manual labour, apprenticeships, the trades. That's why this bill requires a series of public meetings, public hearings across this province, because really this may not be updated for another 30 years. So let's do it right. Let's listen to all the stakeholders, making sure there is full and adequate input on behalf of the people who, I think, have a direct stake in it. That's what the member for St Catharines was saying.

He said that as a society we sometimes take for granted the contribution that people who work in trades make. I know there's a lot of work to be done also with young people in our schools, where there are opportunities and jobs in the trades and in apprenticeships. Sometimes they are not aware of the opportunities that exist. There are good-paying jobs and fulfilling careers in the trades. That's why I think it's critical that we do it right. That's what we're saying. That's what the member for St Catharines said very eloquently. He has always been an advocate of full public hearings on important bills. This bill is important to young people especially. That's why I fully endorse what the member for St Catharines said, and I think we should pay heed.

Mr Bisson: I listened to the member for St Catharines talk in his presentation a little bit about what the minister had mentioned earlier, which I think is quite telling. The member mentioned that the minister has said that the reason they want to bring forward this act is that they believe they need to modernize what is an old act, that is some 30 years old, and create more jobs.

But what was really interesting was that not more than five or 10 minutes before the minister was up giving his presentation I distinctly heard him talk about workers in a particular plant earning \$70,000 a year as journeymen. He went on at some length to talk about how that was a bad thing and then said, "Oh, my God, imagine, some of them with overtime even make up to \$100,000 a year."

I think that's the cat out of the bag. That's really what this is all about. This government doesn't believe that workers should be able to make a half-decent wage. They're horrified at the prospect of some journeyman or some worker working in some plant somewhere working overtime, or working extra hours of any type, making \$70,000 or \$100,000 a year, and they want to roll back wages. That's what this is all about.

This government wants to be able to say they want to create more apprentices. All they're talking about is that they want to dilute the apprenticeship program and the journeyman program, so that you have a whole bunch of unskilled people making, rather than \$70,000 a year, \$30,000, \$40,000, \$20,000, who the heck knows? That's what this really is all about.

I say shame on the government. There is nothing wrong with working people getting a good wage for the work they do. That's how our economy works. When this government starts to think for some reason that some worker making \$70,000 a year is somehow a bad thing, boy, are we in trouble, because they really don't understand what the basis of this economy is all about, that is, workers having an income that they can then go out and spend and keep the economy going by purchasing other goods and services.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Bradley: Thank you for the input from each of the members who had spoken. I want to say to my friend the member for St Catharines-Brock that I always wonder why a federal government of any stripe would send transfer payments to a provincial government that simply gives them away in a tax cut. They send the money to the provincial government, and then they take the money and give it away in a tax cut which benefits the richest people in this part of the country here in Ontario. I always wonder why that would happen.

To the other members, I think the member for Cochrane South has put his finger on what the real issue is here. Sometimes members let something slip out that they don't want to let slip out. When the minister seemed to lament the fact that somebody who is an industrial worker might make \$70,000 a year, it was quite clear he was talking about some of the people who work very hard in our industrial concerns.

There are members of the Canadian Auto Workers in my constituency who sometimes have to work seven days a week and 12 hours a day, so of course the overtime is going to accumulate. These people are making some significant sacrifices to do so, time they would like to spend with their family, time they would like to spend in recreation, time they would like to be doing other things, perhaps even rest, but they have spent that time on the job and have been remunerated for that. I don't think anybody here should be criticizing people in that position.

I recognize that there has to be updating of a bill, but it's like saying, if you take the example of a car, somehow the car needs some work, so we're going to put in a new engine even though it's an air-conditioning system we need. What I'm saying is, simply make appropriate changes and not just change for change's sake.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Lankin: I say to the member for Hamilton Centre behind me that I'll be a little less boisterous but as passionate as he is in his defence of workers with respect to this bill and its effect on apprenticeships.

Mr Bradley: He's still not as loud as Cliff Pilkey.

Ms Lankin: He's trying, though.

I want to say to the minister that I really wish when we're having these debates and he spends some time in the House that he actually would listen to some of the arguments and concerns that are raised, instead of just brushing them away like anything that's said on this side of the House has no merit.

I say to the minister that there are aspects of updating apprenticeship legislation with which we would agree. Looking at many of the new occupations that have emerged in the over 30 years since the legislation was put in place, it is reasonable to look at bringing them in. Some of those things have been done in the past by regulation changes. We don't have to get into a lot of detail; there have been a number of updates done in that way. But it's not a bad idea to look at the framework for legislation to update the framework. That's what the minister says he wants to do. In that respect, there are some aspects with which we could agree.

But if he had been listening, he would have heard from members on this side of the House, from my friend the member for Hamilton Centre and yesterday evening from my friend the member for Cochrane South, that there are certain aspects of this bill that cause us great concern, and we wish even now that the minister would listen and would respond in specifics to those aspects. I'm going to try to outline four of them. There are some others that I think will emerge through public hearings when we listen to the people who are most directly affected, but there are four in particular that I want to speak about.

First is the issue that the government is looking at re-orienting the apprenticeship program and directing it almost exclusively towards the youth sector. You've got to look at that. You've got to question what you mean. I personally, for our caucus as youth critic, have a fair number of things I would like to say to the government about the lack of action on youth unemployment. It's still

sitting at over 15%. So if there is an opportunity to expand apprenticeships in Ontario, although, contrary to what the minister has said, the provincial government has cut funding for apprenticeships — but I do agree with him that that has been compounded by a \$40-million-plus cut from the federal government — it will be interesting to see how this expansion can really take place, unless of course it takes place by virtue of downloading the cost of this on to individuals. I'm going to get to that in a moment when we talk about lower wages for apprenticeships and about tuition fees and barriers like user fees.

But an orientation to youth, who are the majority of people who already make up apprenticeships, misses a whole group of people, particularly in the kind of volatile economy we have experienced in the last decade or so in this province, where we have seen large numbers of older workers lose their employment and have to start over again. They're not at a point where they can simply move out into early retirement, either economically or perhaps even in terms of their age. They have to start again, and many of them choose to go into apprentice trades. If it isn't open and welcoming and accommodating to that group of people, you have continued putting older workers at risk. I would mention the decimation of the program for older worker adjustment that we've seen under this government. This is another kick at that population who are quite vulnerable in terms of their ability to access other employment. That's number one that I hope the government will address.

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The second area — and this is part of the overall deregulation that I have a concern about with respect to the bill, things that are being taken out of legislation and put into regulation or not addressed at all — is with respect to the issue of wage setting. As people who have experienced the apprenticeship program in the province will know, apprenticeship wages have traditionally been set at a percentage of a journeyman's wage for year one, year two, depending on the length of time of the apprenticeship. By completely deregulating it, this government seems to be using language, if I understand your argument, that this will create more opportunities. It sounds an awful lot like those people in the hospitality and tourism industry — the minister mentioned the hospitality industry — who are always opposed to any increase in minimum wage because they say that's going to cause a loss of jobs. They'd like to see the minimum wage driven down.

In effect, deregulating the wage level for apprenticeship seems to me to be an opportunity to drive those wages down. I can't see any other outcome that will come of this. I don't believe there are employers who will increase the wage levels there. Why would they? It's not consistent with the bottom-line operations of their business. By deregulating it, by having a downward pressure, you create a cheap pool of labour. You create a situation where people may spend longer in apprenticeships than is needed.

There is already an abuse on work sites, where you have people at the last stage of their apprenticeship who

do not take the final step to become a journeyman because their job would disappear. They've got that threat from the employer. There's already an abuse, and you don't think that will get worse if you deregulate wages? This is simply creating a cheap pool of labour and creating a downward pressure on the journeyman wage. I think you have to look at that; that will be the inevitable result of this.

There's also the issue of phasing out the regulated journeyman-to-apprentice ratio. That's X number of journeymen on the site per number of apprentices, for reasons of safety, of quality of workmanship and of appropriate training of the apprentices.

I was shocked to hear the minister say that the current legislation doesn't say anything about that fact that if they've got two job sites operating, maybe they'd put all the journeymen on one site and all the apprentices on the other. Well, if you've experienced that out there, if you think that's happening, then put in place the regulations to stop it. Don't deregulate further and say, "Because they can already do that, therefore we're going to let them set the numbers themselves."

Once again, if you're in a very competitive industry and you're trying to cut corners and bring costs down, don't you think there's going to be incredible pressure on those contractors, those employers — because it's not just in construction — to increase the number of apprentices they have per journeyman, even if they don't want to? How can you guarantee that the appropriate level of supervision and therefore the appropriate quality of workmanship is going to be done? This is something we should be concerned about, as the member for Hamilton Centre said, from a public safety point of view, as well as from an appropriate training point of view, as well as from a fair employment condition.

The fourth issue I want to touch on is the introduction of user fees and tuitions, payment to register training agreements and what I see as potential barriers for participation in apprenticeship.

Earlier on, when I was speaking in response to a member's intervention, I referred to a letter from Colleen Twomey. This woman is 35. She's talking about having lost her job in the hospital sector, how she feels about having gone back to restart her life and gone into an apprenticeship — she's already earning less as an apprentice than she was in the job she lost — and on top of that being faced with the prospect of having to potentially pay tuition fees to participate in this training opportunity. It becomes for her a barrier that might well stop her dead in her tracks, and many other workers, stop them from being able to pursue this option.

What options are left for those people, people who have had a career, who have lost that through institutional downsizing or corporate downsizing, who are trying to find their way back through training, doing all the right things, and you're putting barriers in their way?

The minister says: "Some of these concerns, particularly with respect to tuition fees, may be addressed through the regulations we've set up. Maybe you won't

feel so bad." Well, time and time again with this government we see you taking protections out of the law and putting them into regulations that can be changed at a whim behind closed doors with the signature of five cabinet ministers. It is only fair, if there's going to be good public consultation, as the minister alleged, if there's going to be proper debate in committee hearings, that those draft regulations be released.

That's the last thing I would say to you: Please give us a clear commitment not only that you will hold public hearings around this province but that you will release the draft regulations so that people can see the whole package and can make the argument about where the regulations fail and where it must be written into the protection of the legislation. Let's make sure that if we are going to rewrite a 30-year-old law, we do it together to improve the situation for those apprentices in this province and not to worsen the situation, which I fear your bill does.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Questions and comments?

Mr Carroll: I always enjoy the comments of the member for Beaches-Woodbine because I really respect her sincerity and her wish to get it done right. She and I don't always agree on what that way would be to get it done right, but I believe very much in her sincerity.

She talks about the emphasis on young people and her concern that we will be abandoning people who have been displaced and need to be retrained. I share her concern about those people, because quite frankly we have a lot of people who already have a skill, but a skill no longer in demand in the workplace, and we need to retrain those folks to acquire a new skill. I agree with her that we can't abandon those people. I don't see anything in this act that says we will be abandoning those people.

She talked about the tuition issue, and this was mentioned by members of the Liberal Party too. I'm not really sure how an apprenticeship program with a tuition attached to it is a whole lot different from a co-op program. In each case, we're encouraging somebody to learn on the job as well as have a school component, and we're asking that person to contribute to the cost of the school component. I think it's fair that we ask everybody to participate to some extent in the cost of their continuing education or their apprenticeship or whatever. I don't see the big to-do about the fact that we're asking somebody to participate in tuition.

The other thing I think we have to remember is that all of this is geared not only towards creating better training for our young people but also to making our industry more competitive because we live in this world economy. That industry needs more workers. We live in a free enterprise economy. It has worked, sometimes not as well as it should, but that free enterprise economy demands skilled workers with good trade skills so that they —

The Speaker: Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr Caplan: I'd like to congratulate the member for Beaches-Woodbine for her remarks. I find it amazing that the member for Chatham-Kent starts talking in code: "a

competitive environment." I think it confirms what the member talked about as a pool of cheap labour. That's what the intent of this legislation is all about. Obviously, the code for cheap labour is "competitive industry." Isn't that very interesting?

As well, the member for Beaches-Woodbine made a very good point when she talked about older workers. There's a part of this bill which talks about part-time, contract and self-employed people being able to do apprenticeship. I've asked this question before, and I wonder if any member of the government bench or maybe from the New Democratic Party — the member for Beaches-Woodbine might want to touch on this herself — could answer: How does a self-employed person become an apprentice? Who would supervise them? Where would they get their mentorship from? How does that work? That seems counterintuitive. You can't be self-employed, because the nature of apprenticeship is a mixture of on-the-job training and instructional training. That's the way it works, so absolute nonsense is trying to be passed off to the people of Ontario in that section of this bill.

As well, the member mentions tuition. By the government's own user survey, when they asked the question to apprentices in Ontario, "If we imposed tuition upon you, would that prohibit you from going into the trades?" 50% of them said, "We would not have entered the trades." Is that removing barriers? No. You'd have half as many, so of the 11,000 apprentices we'd have 5,500.

2020

Mr Christopherson: I am pleased to rise and commend my colleague from Beaches-Woodbine on an excellent overview of the concerns we have about this bill and also the lack of response on the part of the government, particularly the minister, who is in the House at this time, to the key issues we're raising. You're still dancing around them.

When the member from Chatham rose saying that this was somehow similar to a co-op program, you've got to wonder just how much understanding there is about apprenticeship programs and journey person programs and how all this works in the real world. Remember the real world, folks? It's outside the boardroom; it's where people live and work.

He also raised the word "competitive," which of course got a lot of his colleagues buzzing away, just as you would expect when that word gets raised. But it got me thinking, if I were sitting over there with the warped sense of how the world works from their point of view, what would that mean in terms of raising the issue of competitiveness? It ties to what my colleague from Beaches-Woodbine raised when she talked about the fact that all you're really trying to do with the changes to how wages are set for apprentices is to lower them.

In terms of being competitive, it seems to me that given the fact you can't move the work offshore, by and large — a lot of it is construction work, so it's got to happen in the geography of the province regardless of who does it. It's got to happen here. So what's competitive? Now that you can have as many apprentices per journeypersons as you

want, I guess competitiveness means stuffing lots of apprentices in there with fewer journeypersons. Competitiveness would also mean lowering the wages of those apprentices lower than your competition.

At the end of the day, you've got more apprentices, few journeypersons supervising them and lower wages being paid, and that's how you're going to be more competitive. How is that supposed to help the apprentices of this province?

Mr Froese: I agree with the member for Chatham-Kent: I too appreciate the comments the member for Beaches-Woodbine makes. To her credit, I really don't know of anybody else in this House who actually studies and reads a bill before speaking like she does. She takes what she feels is positive out of the bill and expresses that she can agree with those issues and those items, and she also tells us where she disagrees. Sometimes she's more passionate than other times.

In her comments she mentioned that she was concerned about the wage provisions and how she feels there will be a reduction in wages if this bill gets passed. I have those same concerns. I disagree with her: I don't see where those wages will be reduced. I think wages and ratios can be set by the industry through either the guidelines for skilled trades or through collective bargaining. We have examples of that already. If we look at the tool and die makers, at the wages that wouldn't be in regulations, minimum wage is \$6.85 an hour so at 50 hours it's \$17,125, but the actual salary they're getting now is \$26,000, so there's a great difference there. It's the same with an automotive service technician. At \$6.85 an hour at 48 hours — that's the average — it's \$16,097, but the actual salary is \$27,000. I see that continuing.

The Speaker: Response, member for Beaches-Woodbine.

Ms Lankin: Let me say to the members opposite that when you talk about competition, you put it up on some altar like it's an icon to be worshipped. I believe in good competition. I spent two years as Minister of Economic Development and Trade promoting industry in this province, promoting a competitive atmosphere. But if you're talking about unfettered, unchecked competition, if you're talking about unfettered, unchecked capitalism, then no, I don't agree. Take a look at where it's got us in the United States. The President of the United States has a problem with self-control and the whole world's markets are in the dumper. That's what you believe in in terms of unchecked capitalism? Give me a break.

There is only evidence to support my contention that if you deregulate those wages the only pressure will be a downward pressure on those wages. You say they'll be protected in collective agreements. There are 48,000 apprentices right now working for 26,000 employers in this province. The majority of them are non-union. We'll get out there and work with people to try and change that, because we'll have to; that will be the only way to protect these people. But it used to be that apprenticeships were understood to be a contributor to the workplace, to the employer, as well as a learning opportunity; not a pool of

cheap labour that you're going to set out there for employers to abuse in order to bring down wages of journeypersons. That is what this agenda is.

You know what you're doing? You're following these absolute measures that have been taken in places like Alberta and in places like the southern US, and in each of those areas, you know what happened? It led to a worsening skills shortage and now they're looking at rebuilding the programs they dismantled. We will have to do the same thing here in Ontario. After you guys are gone, this program will have to be rebuilt, because apprentices will be protected in the future.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): I'm not sure that the compliments the earlier speakers paid to the member for Beaches-Woodbine might be withdrawn after those passionate remarks.

I'd like to start my remarks tonight by saying that I wholeheartedly support the fundamental principles of this bill which I believe will help make Ontario more competitive. That word "competitive" is a word that I particularly have a great deal of respect for, because the alternative to being competitive is being out of business. If someone doesn't recognize that competitiveness is a necessity in the business world, they're going to be out of business. Perhaps that explains in a small part why, when the third party in this Legislature left government, they left the province with a \$100-billion debt and 10,000 fewer jobs in this province than when they started, because they didn't recognize the necessity of the word competitiveness.

Bill 55, if passed by this Legislature, would play an important part in helping the government achieve its goal to strengthen education and training services, including the acquisition of skills needed in the workplace. Our province has undertaken necessary major reforms of its educational and training systems. At the core of these reforms is the determination to create a system in which every student is prepared for success: in the classroom, success in the workplace and success throughout life.

Bill 55 would help strengthen this goal. When passed by the Legislature, Bill 55 would help provide more opportunities for young people to learn specific skills that are in demand. Bill 55 would help the government achieve its intentions to double the number of apprenticeships in the next two years, as pointed out by the minister previously.

It would also provide the framework for reform of the apprenticeship system, which has not been significantly revised since 1964. We are a world away from the type of economy this province had in 1964, and our training and educational systems need to reflect that.

Jobs requiring high-level skills that are learned primarily through on-site experiences are essential to Ontario's industry. People with these skills include tool and die makers in manufacturing, industrial mechanic millwrights in pulp and paper plants, and master chefs in the hospitality industry. All these groups have shown support for this legislation that we're debating here tonight.

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If current Ontario employers require people with these specialized skills, companies new to Ontario, companies that help fuel our economic growth in this province, will need them as well. However, we need to increase the availability and support of these types of learning situations, and Bill 55 seeks to address that by creating a climate supportive of training for highly skilled labour, which will improve Ontario's ability to maintain its skilled labour force and attract growth for Ontario.

The Ontario government recognizes the critical importance of skilled workers to our economy. Since 1990, all new jobs on a net basis have gone to workers with a high level of education and job skills. In fact, jobs requiring higher levels of education and training are forecast to contribute nearly half of all new jobs in Ontario between 1995 and the year 2005. Representatives of the manufacturing industry, hotel industry, automotive sector and institutions of higher learning have all voiced support for this bill. While employers are looking for skilled workers, the supply of people with these skills is not keeping pace. Shortages of people with the right skills are already critical for some sectors and will become widened in others.

For example, in the auto parts industry, a sector which is a large employer in my riding of Halton North, employers are concerned about a shortage of skilled workers. One particular company, Karmax, which is a subsidiary of Magna International, has for years sourced its tool and die makers in other countries: in England, in Germany, in Italy and even as far away as South Africa.

The industry also expects that more than one third of people currently working in the industry will retire over the next 10 years. In the auto assembly industry, about 40% of its workers will reach retirement age by the year 2000. The same situation is occurring in construction trades. The workforce is aging and not enough young people are training to become tomorrow's highly skilled workers.

While some of the problems are common between various industries, Bill 55 will allow each industry to determine the best method to apprentice its workers. At the same time, the legislation will allow smaller skill sets to be recognized, making them portable between specific operations. The bill also encourages youth employment, a situation which needs to be addressed.

Ontario's highly qualified workforce is one of the province's major selling points for new investors, which means new jobs in Ontario. A 1997 study by Goldfarb Consultants for the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism found that the availability of skilled, educated workers was one of the main reasons that companies invest in a province, and that investment means jobs, new jobs for Ontario. Each one of those jobs means new dreams for the people who take them.

The Ontario government recognizes that a serious, prolonged skill shortage in high-investment sectors of the economy could affect Ontario's reputation as a place to do business. When passed by the Legislature, Bill 55 would

provide a framework that would help ensure the supply of skilled workers that employers need to compete in the marketplace. This bill would encourage more employers to get involved in the training process. It would eliminate unnecessary red tape while maintaining the government's role in protecting the quality of training. The bill would create a more flexible training system that would encourage apprenticeships to be extended to new jobs and industries. At the same time, the bill would ensure that the existing excellence in apprenticeship is not harmed. High standards of quality and safety would continue for employers, workers and consumers. Employers, workers and unions would receive greater responsibility for training.

Bill 55 would also encourage more young people to participate in apprenticeship training. In June the government announced it is strengthening the Ontario youth apprenticeship program. This program helps young people begin to train for an apprenticeship while completing their high school studies. The program helps to strengthen co-op education, which is also an important goal of secondary school reform. An important part of reform to our high schools is providing teachers and guidance counsellors with the information that students need in today's world. Through a stronger Ontario youth apprenticeship program, through expanded co-op opportunities and through other resources such as Career Gateway, we are giving young people more opportunities. We are giving them more opportunities to understand the wide range of careers that is available to them and to make informed decisions about their future and the future of Ontario, to keep Ontario growing and to make Ontario the best place in this country to live, work and raise a family.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have listened very carefully, and some of the points the honourable member is making are actually not bad, but let's try to remember that Bill 55, as has been said previously, has no teeth, and let's remember above everything else what you have done to destroy the competitive edge in Ontario. Look across the issue of tuition fees. Our universities have been on the edge not only of research but on the edge of producing new ideas for the future certainly in terms of competitiveness when we compare Canada to the rest of the world.

The G-7, as an example: Who is spending the most money for research and development across the G-7 countries? What standards do we use in Canada, specifically what standard is this government using and how much money are we spending for research and development? Today we're talking about apprenticeship programs, but how can you have an effective and efficient apprenticeship program when you are cutting off the very legs of a system of education that all of this apprenticeship program has to be based on? I'm saying to you today that if you want to give Bill 55 some teeth, you certainly have to look at the budget and increase the spending for education and research and development. Increasing tuition fees really means cutting the legs off any program that could be efficient in terms of an apprenticeship program.

Mr Caplan: Very well said.

Mr Bisson: I'm a little bit worried, after the comments of the member of the Liberal Party, that somebody said, "Well said." What he said was that some of the points the government has been making aren't bad and that the legislation has no teeth. I would suggest that this legislation is bad, and God, I don't want to give it any more teeth than it's got, because we know who's going to get bitten. That will be the apprentices and journeymen of this province.

I get back directly to the comments of the member from the government party. You're saying that each industry can best decide what skill sets it needs, sort of insinuating that what you can do after this legislation, let's say in the mining industry, is say, "When it comes to millwrights, we're just going to give them these very narrow sets of skills that are necessary for our industry to be competitive." Somehow the government members try to make it look as if this is a good thing because, after all, it's going to mean blah, blah, blah, all that stuff they're saying on the other side.

The point is there are a couple of problems with that. First of all, none of those skills will be transferable to the extent that we now have under our present apprenticeship program. We don't train part of a millwright, when we train a millwright in Ontario, specifically for just the mining industry. We train millwrights as complete millwrights so they can transfer those skills to whatever employers might need them in Ontario. Be that in the construction industry, be it in the pulp and paper industry or be it in the automotive industry, that's a good thing.

That's what makes our economy strong. That's what makes it good. But you're talking about limiting the skill sets that we're going to give individual workers when it comes to their trades so that they can be ghettoized into one industry. That's not only bad for that industry but it's also bad for the economy overall, because we need to ensure that we have highly qualified, skilled and motivated workers in Ontario to make our economy work. What you're doing is going to put it way back in the Stone Age, and in the end it's not going to bode well for the economy of the province.

Mr Galt: I'd like to compliment the member for Halton North for just an excellent presentation, very thoughtfully put together and presented. In his opening remarks he talked about how the apprenticeship bill, Bill 55, is going to improve the competitive edge of the province. I don't think there's any question that he's dead-on, that by providing more training, double the number of apprentices who will probably be training in Ontario, getting that kind of skilled labour into the market, that's the kind of competitive edge the industry and economy and the province desperately needs. It's been sliding for some time.

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You look at this particular bill, and it's upgrading from 1964. That's 34 years ago. Think of cars in 1964, a nice car costing something like \$2,500, something that's almost impossible for most of us to remember, those kinds of prices and the kind of cars we had in that era. That is

really what the old apprenticeship program was based on, what we were doing in 1964, and that's certainly not meeting the needs and the wishes of the people of Ontario here in 1998.

The member for Parkdale was talking about education. "Cutting the legs right from under it" I think was his term, as I remember, when in fact what we've been doing for education is bringing in all kinds of standards: standardized report cards, something your government could have been doing. We've brought in curriculum that's going to be used across Ontario. We're testing the grade 3s and now the grade 6s. We're requiring specific time with teachers, with students. Those are the kinds of standards and those are the kinds of legs that we're putting under our education system.

Mr Cordiano: The members opposite really are deceiving themselves, because they are saying that in effect you're making things better when you actually haven't realized that you've made things a lot worse in some areas. This is one of those areas where you've made it a lot worse, in education.

You talk about standardized curriculum, standardized report cards. You can take some of the credit for that, but remember it was the NDP who established the Royal Commission on Learning, and everyone endorsed the findings of that commission. All three parties have done that. Yes, you happen to be coincidentally the government and happen to embrace those ideas, and I give you some credit for bringing those forward, but don't stand up and try and say that what you're doing now is going to be a milestone, it's like the event of the century, my God, what you're doing in terms of apprenticeship programs.

People have real concerns about those standards that are being actually reduced. Would you not agree with me that Ontario has had some of the finest skilled workers anywhere in the world? You cannot deny that, you cannot deny the fact, and that was built by successive Progressive Conservative governments. I'm willing to say that. The wise governments of the past knew that this was important.

Interjections.

Mr Cordiano: Given what you have done with respect to increasing tuition fees in this area as well, and increasing tuition fees at our post-secondary institutions, you must admit, you have to agree, that it's going to hurt people, that it makes it a lot more difficult for people to go on and to continue.

It's the same thing with this bill in terms of increasing tuition fees. You're making it much more difficult for people to get into these programs.

The Speaker: Responses?

I just might add that if you have a question or comment, it would be probably good if you waited for the response.

Mr Chudleigh: I thank the members for their comments. The member for Parkdale, I would remind you that the competitive edge in Ontario is alive and well. As I walk down Main Street today in Milton or Georgetown or Acton, the shops are all full. When I was campaigning in 1995, half the street was empty. When the companies in

Milton are looking for further employees, they have to go outside of town to find someone because everybody in Milton is almost fully employed. The country is booming, the province is booming, and I don't think our competition is destroying our province.

The member for Cochrane South indicated that we are moving away from the tradition of training people. Yes, perhaps we are. But the world is becoming an increasingly specialized place, and a millwright working in one location may not serve in a different location. So as we enter into these more specialized forms of training, for us to stay on the leading edge of the 21st century, where Ontario wants to be, where Ontario must be, we're going to have to adapt.

As the doctor from Northumberland pointed out, 1964 was a great year. I had a 1964 car and it was a very nice car, but it certainly wasn't anything like the cars we buy today. The cars today are very much more specialized, the same way that the trades in the future will have to be very much more specialized than they are today, with a great deal more knowledge of individual areas rather than a broad knowledge, a broader mindset.

I want to thank the member for Lawrence for recognizing and giving us credit for our educational policies and recognizing that our skilled workers are world-class.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I want to try and dwell for a few minutes on Bill 55, the so-called bill to provide, if you will, a revision to the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act.

Unfortunately, the minister has left. I was pleased that he was in the House most of the afternoon and evening, and I think it's great that he spent some time to hear what other members in the House have to say with respect to his own proposed legislation. I don't think it is so much his own legislation because I know that when he delivers something in the House he means well, but of course he's got directions from the Premier, Mr Mike Harris. Sometimes I know he must feel very uncomfortable because I'm sure he does not fully believe that this piece of legislation will deliver the impact that they wish to accomplish with this piece of legislation.

For the people at home I have to say that this is not a repeat; this is something coming straight, live, from Queen's Park. It's dealing with an important piece of legislation which deals, I would say, especially with those at the age of 25 or 26. I hope the members of the government side really make note of that, because at the age of 25 or 26, men and women are ready to face life, to have a family, to get on with life and build on that.

Mr Minister, Mr Premier, this is not the way, to tell 25-year-olds, 27-year-olds, "We are going to train you through some private people, private companies, and you're on your own." That's practically what this proposed legislation does, because there is no commitment on the part of the government to overview the skills that those young people, so-called apprentices, would be gaining through a private firm, an employer.

It's not that I don't trust, by all means, the employers out there, but what would be in the best interests of the

employer, to train journeymen — now we call them apprentices — to what stage? To the stage that they need them to do certain jobs that suit themselves in their place of employment.

I would ever hope that there were other incentives provided by this government telling employers, "We want you to have these people under your wing, and when they come out in two or three years we want to see them fully trained, fully skilled, so just in case they are left without a job, without a position within your place of employment, they would find employment in any other place." If there is one thing I agree with, not only with the last speaker on the government side but with all the others, it is that there is a shortage of skilled, qualified tradespeople in our province, and it's a problem.

Mr Premier, Mr Minister, you can't have it both ways. You can't have on one side cuts, cuts all over the place forcing those people to drop off in the middle of their best school years, and then say, "We don't provide for you any additional measures, funds, so you will be on your own."

I have to say that with all the good intentions of the minister, this piece of legislation falls way short of the goals that he intends to accomplish.

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Perhaps they are thinking that they will expand workfare. Let me tell you, between workfare that you have provided and this piece of legislation there isn't a heck of a difference, and this is where you want to channel those young people. You fail to realize that you're dealing with the future livelihood of those particular young people. "Reform," you say. Yes, of course, reform, but when it's in the best interests of the recipients. This one here, I have to say, is not. It is certainly not in the best interests of those so-called journeymen or apprentices.

The bottom line, therefore, is that unless there is a solid commitment from the government to fund some programs, to throw in some incentives, employers will not dedicate themselves, because it takes time and it takes money on their part. Then we may have to go into another portion of fees and tuition fees and stuff like that — absolutely not. Unless there is some regulation, legislation, some direction and control as well by this government, it isn't enough to say, "You're on your own, you're going to the private force." Unless there is some control, some direction, some legislation by this government, we will not see a reasonable numbers of apprentices coming out with skills from any employer.

Let me tell you that I'm terribly disappointed in the Premier and the minister producing this piece of legislation, because they are passing up a wonderful opportunity to say, "You know, we have a 14% to 18% unemployment rate among young people" — and I would include in that particular number the 25-, 26-, 27-year-olds. I call those young people. You're missing a wonderful opportunity to provide some solid, long-term employment for those people.

I speak to a lot of young people, unemployed people, and they have all the best intentions in the world. They say: "I want a job, but I want a job with a future. I have

just got married and purchased a house and I don't have a reliable job." This does not offer any comfort to the future of those young people, and I'm really surprised that the Premier and the minister are not taking that into consideration.

You have abandoned your responsibility for making provisions, making sure that the young ones who will go through the treadmill don't come out as semi-skilled workers. When times are good, well, times are good and employers most likely — look what you have done with your own laws. The employers command the salaries. They have to work overtime, they've got to work on Saturday at the same pay in the same conditions. I don't think that is an advantage for those particular young people. In tough times they downsize, and who do you think the first ones to go will be? Those with fewer skills, fewer trades. They may be paid less compared to some, but they will be the first ones to go. We will continue to compound an existing problem that we have today. We will continue to compound the unemployment rate among our young people. We have a government that, on one hand, is pushing them out on the streets and, on the other hand, does not make any provisions.

As an example let's take the squeegee kids. You don't like to see the squeegee kids at the various street corners? Well, what are you doing for those young people? Maybe you should take a little bit of a lead from Mayor Lastman. At least he has done something about it. At least he has been pulling a few people off the streets. What is this government doing about it?

Mr Ford: Planning to move to California.

Mr Sergio: The member says they come from California, or whatever. The fact is that when you are in government and you are faced with a problem, you've got to come up with a solution. You have abandoned your responsibility to our young people, to give them a solid future with a trade, with something that they can look forward to in the future and say, "If this doesn't go, I will find another job." You people haven't recognized that. What you have failed to recognize, what you have failed to assume the responsibility for is to make sure that those providers of some skilled trades will do it in a comfortable atmosphere, with regulations, with impositions, with controls, with a mechanism in place here, from this legislation, and not in the boardroom of the employers out here.

Mr Speaker, I thank you for my few minutes, as my time unfortunately is up.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bisson: The member spoke very briefly about one aspect of this bill that we really haven't talked about in any detail, and that is the whole issue about how this government is changing the system in such a way that it will discourage apprentices from going off to trade school. Presently there are regulations that basically say that if you're going through, let's say, an electrical apprenticeship, you go to school three times: basic, intermediate, advanced, each of eight weeks. Under that provision, if my employer says, "I don't want you to go," I'm able to force the situation and force my employer to release me so I can

go off to trade school and get the training that I need. One of the things this government is doing will make it easier for employers to intimidate apprentices from going to school, where they do get full apprenticeships. How they're doing that is by a couple of things.

First of all, they're going to limit the amount of money that the apprentice makes while the apprentice, he or she, is in trade school, so that's an economic barrier right there. Second, they're going to turn around and say to the apprentice, "You are now responsible for paying a tuition fee for you to go into your trade school." So the little bit of money that you do get from the EI fund for going into trade school is going to be gouged even further back by the amount of money that you're going to have to pay in tuition fees towards the provincial government.

The other thing now, which is really scary, you're going to make it possible for the apprentice, by way of regulation, to decide when he or she should go to school, if at all. The danger with that is, if you put that kind of freeness inside the regulation, as I might call it, employers are going to intimidate apprentices into choosing not to go to trade school.

That in the end is a loser for everybody. It's a loser for the apprentice because the apprentice doesn't get the skill set that they need through the actual training that they get at the community college level system. I think in the end it might be a short-sighted gain for the employer, but in the long run for industry it's going to mean we're going to have fewer trained people. If you think you've got an apprentice shortage now, you wait about 10 years down the road if you pass this legislation.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's my privilege to respond to the member for Yorkview and his comments. I must, however, for the viewers, share a very important situation in Durham. The Speaker would probably know that the Durham University Centre, the skills training centre located in Whitby, is very highly recognized and it's providing a very important resource for the youth and indeed the skilled workers that Durham and in fact all of Ontario need.

The skills training centre is under the capable leadership of the president, Gary Polonsky, a person I have a lot of respect for. In fact, you would know, Mr Speaker, that a few weeks ago the Minister of Labour, the Honourable Jim Flaherty, who's from Whitby riding, Durham Centre, was there to present a cheque in the amount of \$5 million for the joint partnership that the university has formed with York and Trent.

A student doesn't have to leave Durham any longer — we don't have a university, or we didn't — to get a full education. They can take the skills training that the college offers, and most important at the skills training centre in Whitby, but augment that at the college level. They have training in robotics, the very latest numeric-controlled machinery and equipment, and they're working in partnership with the private sector.

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I think it's important for members to take a little departure. We know how long the apprenticeship legis-

lation has been in need of reform, but indeed the whole world of work is, you might say, in the area of reform. The Minister of Education has put out a very interesting document called the Future of Work in Ontario. I would encourage people to phone the ministry, phone my riding office in Bowmanville, and get a copy of this important piece of discussion paper. In this discussion paper — it's about the future of work with very interesting statistics — it tells us about the skills training that's needed for the future of Ontario.

Mr Caplan: I'd actually like to pick up where the last member, the member for Durham East, left off. He talked about training centres. There are many training centres. In fact, some of the unions have, not all of them, excellent training facilities and it would be interesting for the members to know that oftentimes, particularly in some of the construction fields, as part of the dues that you pay, that money goes into the training centres. Those training centres have up-to-date equipment, have all the very latest instructional methodologies, all the very latest in emerging technologies and sectors for retraining, upgrading, reskilling. That's the kind of thing that somebody like Hugh Laird has said, that this proposal, Bill 55, could mean the death of his training centre, and I don't want to see that happen. I don't want to see that happen if they have one that's working well in Durham. I don't know the particular site, but that's the potential that is going to happen as a result of Bill 55.

There are a couple of other interesting aspects of the bill. There's a change now from employers who will hire apprentices to sponsors of training. Who is a sponsor of training? What will that mean? Does that mean that a municipality that's going to hire a workfare participant, for example, is going to now become a sponsor of training?

I once again pose the question to the government members or to all members. This legislation says that self-employed people can become apprentices. I challenge any member of this Legislature to tell me how a self-employed person becomes an apprentice. Who supervises them? Where do they get the skills from?

Mr Bradley: I enjoyed the speech because it pointed out some of the problems with this legislation and the fact that indeed there are some people out there who would like to see a change in legislation, and I agree with updating, everybody agrees with updating, but it's the way you're doing it. You usually want to get for the province by far the highest quality you can. Instead, I think some of the consequences of this legislation will be a diminishing of the quality, a diminishing of the standards. There may be some in the province who'll be in favour of that.

What you will find, however, is that enlightened members of the business community — and I found this, I must say, in the field of the environment — enlightened members of the corporate sector will want to see the very best individuals coming to work for their companies. That means they're going to have to have standards which are acceptably high; that means they're going to want to ensure that everyone from all walks of life will have an

opportunity to take part in an apprenticeship program and that some will not be prevented by the fact that they do not have the money to pay the tuition.

Tuition scares us over here in the opposition because we've noted what this government has done with tuition for those going to community colleges and universities. Many people are calling into our constituency offices today very much saddened by the fact that their young students are unable to go to either university or to a community college because of the cost. They recognize as well this government has removed rent control, so that is having a major impact on students as well.

The Speaker: Response.

Mr Sergio: Thank you to my colleagues who have responded to my comments, especially the members for Cochrane South, Durham East, Oriole and St Catharines.

I was particularly pleased to hear the member for Durham East mention the skills training centre. There you have an example that if you have a particular place that is working out well and it's a skills training centre, why remove the incentives of centres that are producing exactly what the government intends to do? Instead, they are finding ways to dismantle them to go somewhere else where they will have no control, where there will be no regulations, as a matter of fact deregulation again, and I don't think this is the proper way to go about it.

I was here when the minister said he's willing to look at public hearings. I think it's wonderful, but I would like to remind the Premier and the minister and the members on the government side that on all previous bills — and I say that without exception — they have gone through public hearings and they brought back into this House only the changes the government wanted. They did not listen to the people; they did not include the changes that were supposed to improve whatever particular bill. While I'm positive and looking forward assist in the public hearings, I don't have much faith in the government, that they will do the right thing on this one as well.

I cannot be so positive when the government wants to leave it to the private sector without including any legislation, any regulations to have control as needed.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Marchese: Thank you for this opportunity to speak to Bill 55. I want to congratulate a few people for being here: Sandra Clifford from the Ontario Federation of Labour, who's the education director; Ron Groulx, who represents the employers, boilermakers, training coordinator; James Moffatt, who is a training and trades coordinator, and I thank them for having the emotional fortitude to be here and accept with grace much of what has been said by the Tories in their comments and their speeches. I want to congratulate you too, Mr Speaker, because you look so fresh in the chair, but I have to tell you I'm not so fresh-looking and I think you can tell. Speaker, I think you can tell from that distance that I'm not so fresh-looking. In fact, for me it is very difficult to endure this political Conservative putrefaction that comes from this place. I know they don't like this language because it's hard to

follow. I appreciate that. I am personally drained by it but I'll do my best to make some remarks on this bill.

The members for St Catharines-Brock and Halton North love the opposition members when we're polite, when we have nothing nasty to say about them, when we make some useful suggestions. When we're passionate, they don't mind that, as long as we're passionate but agree with them. But if we are passionate and disagree with them, they begin to dislike it. They say: "You're negative. You have nothing good to say." I'm sensitive to that because a friend of mine the other day said, "Rosario, you should think of saying something nice about them every now and then because if you say something nice, people will listen to you." I desperately try to look for things that I could say about this group of people that might be nice, not to talk about their policies; those I find difficult to accept or to say anything positive about. At the individual level some of them are good folks. I've got to say that.

Interjection: They like cats.

Mr Marchese: This is true. But I cannot for the life of me, on anything they have dealt with here by way of bills or policies, say that I like anything, so it's very difficult to be positive about anything they produce in this place. Would that I could find something, but unfortunately I can't.

Coming to this bill, because the members for St Catharines-Brock and Halton North used the word "competitiveness" — they're not the only ones of course. Every Tory uses that word. For me it has a significant meaning. When Tories use the word "competitive," what does it mean to you, Speaker?

Mr Wettlaufer: It means quality.

Mr Marchese: The member for Kitchener says it means quality.

Mr Marchese: It doesn't really mean that, Speaker. You and I know. You've been around. Sorry, Mr Ford?

Mr Ford: It means expand free trade, PST, GST.

Mr Marchese: What it means is that people are getting less money, are going to be getting less money for the work they do. Isn't that what competitiveness means to you? Sure it does. That's what it means. But you see, I've got no problem with Tories actually saying that. Why can't they say, "We want and accept competitiveness, which actually equates to lower wages for working people"? Say that. Then we can debate it honestly and openly. But when you, the minister and all of you, clothe yourselves in an impenetrable oil that I can't get to, it's difficult to debate. Just shed the oil. Exfoliate yourselves so that we can be clear. You've got to be able to do that with the general public.

Interjection: That's his word for the day.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, that is a fair word. You know that. Thank you, clerks. If you expunge that kind of language, we're in big trouble.

Then you have the member for St Catharines-Brock, who says this bill is good for apprentices. How? Explain it, member for St Catharines-Brock. How is it good for apprentices?

Speaker, you were here, because I heard the speech from the member for Beaches-Woodbine. It was a great speech. She says, how is this bill that permits employers to pay apprentices less than they now earn better for apprentices or apprenticeship programs? I don't understand it. Do you? Does the public? How?

If this is good for apprentices, like the member for St Catharines-Brock says, is it good to begin to force apprentices to pay a fee? Some of those guys there say, "What's wrong with that?" I know my friend Jack Carroll from Chatham-Kent says it's not such a bad thing to allow people to pay; what's wrong with having people pay?

There is a problem with it. The average age for most of these people involved in apprenticeship programs is 27 to 35, possibly older, which means that people are coming back into a profession or a trade and also means that they're probably unemployed elsewhere. It means very likely they don't have a lot of bucks. M. Carroll from Chatham-Kent says it's not so bad to get these people to pay for their own apprenticeship programs. Well, it might be. It could very well cause problems for a lot of people who are looking for these educational opportunities and who might have been laid off by some of your buddies and need a break. But the member for Chatham-Kent says that's not a problem; it's good for apprentices.

The member for St Catharines-Brock continues and says that if we do this, replacing regulated journeyperson-to-apprentice ratios with voluntary guidelines for employers, in his view it must be good.

Speaker, you were here when the member for Beaches-Woodbine talked about that particular problem, and the member for Hamilton Centre spoke to this as well. At the moment there are ratios that are manageable. It permits those who are learning to learn in a small, educational kind of setting. The more you include in that educational setting, the more difficult it is for those journeypersons and those people trying to learn the trade. Would you not agree? It's a simple little thing to understand, I would think. It's like having 40 people in a classroom versus having 10, versus having five. I'm sure it's quite clear even to the Tories to understand this principle.

How is it better to eliminate standards, where you remove regulations and replace them with voluntary guidelines on employers? Why is that better for apprentices, M. Ford, you smiling man, you? He's always smiling. I like him. He smiles in this place. He cheers me up. How is it better?

You have the Minister of Education saying, "We do not have enough people and so we need to reform the system." Change the system so that you can have more people being trained, but why destroy what in large measure has worked well? They say it's got to change. "Why does it have to change? Because we say so." Why? I wasn't entirely clear, given the number of problems that have been identified by many of our members in the NDP, and others, of course. It hasn't been made clear to me, so how is it that whatever you're doing is going to be better for someone out there, apprentices or society in general, except your buddies, the ones who bring the big bucks to

your fundraisers? It's only good for them. It's not good for working people.

I've got to tell you, Speaker, the minister should go and negotiate a deal with the federal government now. He should not be complaining about the Liberals at the federal level cutting \$43 million. I recall those Tory members on this side — you will too, Speaker; you were here — when they used to say to the NDP: "Don't whine about the federal government. You've got the wheel; you're in charge." Now you have the Minister of Education saying, "Why don't you guys go complain to the feds about the \$2.3 billion that hasn't been forthcoming?" Isn't it funny how the tables turn?

Go and negotiate a deal so we can get the money for training that we need now, here in Ontario, instead of attacking them. The money is there. Go and negotiate a deal and bring it to Ontarians. We don't need a Bill 55 that will harm the apprenticeship program as we have identified.

M. Ford, that smiling man over there, I like him a lot. He's always smiling. I want to hear his views.

But that's what I want to say to them. Quebec negotiated a deal that gives Quebec more money than it actually pays in contributions. Let's go, Ontario, and negotiate a deal for us that gives us money so you don't have to force people to pay tuition.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): So why didn't you do that?

Mr Marchese: You've got the wheel now. You can do it. We were trying to do that before we were unelected. You've got the wheel now: You do it.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Carroll: I can never resist the opportunity to comment. The member for Fort York is actually my member. Where I live in the city of Toronto, the member for Fort York is actually my member. So I'm glad to see that he supports me so much.

He comments about, "Go and negotiate a deal." He knows, because his government was there, you can't negotiate a deal with those federal Liberals. You guys tried; you failed. We're trying. They won't negotiate. We're doing the same thing you tried to do and having the same results. We'd be pleased to figure out some way to do that, and you can help us with that.

He talks about the average age of apprentices being 28 to 35. I think right there it tells us what part of the problem is. What happened to those people before they got to be 28? They have been poorly trained; they have been unskilled. We want to get to these people before they're 28 to 35 and teach them the skills so that they can become productive.

You talk about and your members talk about a cheap labour pool. That's what we have now. We have a cheap labour pool of unskilled workers that we haven't trained. That's the problem we're trying to solve. The only way we can solve that, and I'm sure the member for Fort York understands this, is we have to train these people. We have to get them into apprenticeship programs. We have to get them in early. We have to get the trade union move-

ment, the management, everybody to co-operate in helping these young people so that they're not later on in life by the time they find a trade.

I'm delighted with the member for Fort York's passion, and he talked about the passion of his members. I love to see it. It's great to see how he represents constituents in his riding.

Mr Caplan: I want to congratulate the member for Fort York for his remarks. They are always very flamboyant.

He did talk about competitiveness, and we heard that competitiveness mantra from the government when they talked about Bill 31, how that was going to create a competitive environment for Ontario. Obviously they didn't read the remarks of their own member for Eglinton, who talked about how Ontario was one of the most competitive environments in the world already. That is a fact.

The other aspect that the member talked about was the ratios. The ratios are very important. The reason is because you require supervision to be able to learn the skills, to be able to know how to do the job properly, because public safety is potentially at risk if those people are doing the work as they learn.

2120

There's another aspect to the ratios, though: If you have more apprentices per journeyperson, what happens to those people when they get their qualifications, when they get their certification? Is there a job for them afterwards? The answer is no, there is not, because those jobs are being filled by apprentices. You want to create an environment where you have a balance, where you have the ability for people, once they've gained their qualifications, to get jobs. That's a key aspect of apprenticeship training.

The member for St Catharines mentioned another thing: The labour market is very mobile. You have to be able to move. With the changes to rent control that this government has brought in, people moving from place to place are no longer covered by rent control, so they're facing increased costs for their housing and their accommodation. When you look at it, this government is —

The Speaker: Questions and comments? Member for Cochrane South.

Mr Bisson: To my good friend from Fort York, I want to pick up on three points. The first point he made was that this government likes to hide behind the buzz language they happen to be inventing that particular day. In this particular case they're trying to make us believe that somehow this legislation is going to make apprentices and skilled tradespeople in this province much more competitive. The reality is that when you undress the legislation, you find out it's quite the opposite. What they're really going to do is lower the wages of apprentices, lower the skill sets that apprentices are able to get and lower their ability to get the kind of training they need to do the job they've got to do with the trades they're supposed to be working in. As the member points out, and I think he's quite right, this government tends to hide behind language that means quite the opposite.

The other thing he touched on, and I think it's really important, he challenges the Conservative government to go to the federal Liberal government in Ottawa and negotiate the best deal we can. I think that's a really good point. The Conservative member got up and said, "Well, what did you guys do when you were in power for five years?" We went and negotiated with the federal government. I was part of one of the teams that went to negotiate with the federal government, over \$100 million, so we could create the francophone community college system that we created in Ontario. If we had sat and whined about it they way you guys are, we would never have been able to get the money that we got to create le Collège Boréal et le Collège des Grands Lacs.

But no, we said: "We're not going to sit here and just whine about the federal Conservatives, at first, and then the Liberals. We'll try to negotiate." Sure, we were unhappy with them; sure we felt that Ontario wasn't getting its fair share. I still feel that now, but that doesn't absolve you from the responsibility you have and have been charged with by the people of this province to go out and negotiate a good deal. In fact, we were negotiating with the federal government exactly what you failed to negotiate in the three years you've been in government, and that is, dollars for apprenticeship training.

Mr Bradley: I enjoyed the remarks of the member because he didn't mention that they were whacking these people as he usually does.

What's quite obvious in the consultation process is the people with whom they've consulted. The people who will be happiest with this legislation are at the Conservative fundraiser tonight with Mike Harris, because they are the people who were consulted. What we were looking for was a widespread consultation in the province with people directly affected, people who have had some experience in the field of the delivery of apprenticeship programs in the province.

Nobody here, not anybody in any of the three parties, believes that the present act, as it is constituted, is satisfactory. We want to see the changes take place. What we're concerned about is that you're trying to lower the standards, as you are with the environment, if I can draw the comparison, Mr Speaker, knowing of your great concern for the environment. There is a comparison there. When you come to environmental regulations, we have the government pulling away all the regulations that would protect the environment. We have the government taking away 40% of the staff and 33% of the budget, or vice versa; in other words, tremendous cuts taking place there.

I see the same thing happening in this bill, and it must make you mighty sorry to see that happen.

I know the constituents of the future riding of Etobicoke Centre are going to be extremely concerned with the kind of provisions that we find within this bill. That's why it's going to be essential not only that you go across the province and have your hearings in various communities but that you actually listen to the input and modify your legislation so that all of us can applaud it and say, "It is truly a progressive measure."

The Speaker: Response?

Mr Marchese: I want to say that Germany has one of the most effective apprenticeship programs in the world. The reason for that is because employers and unions work together and they spend billions of dollars. The private sector itself, not the government, spends billions of dollars. We don't do that here very well at all. We don't have that kind of collaboration between government and labour. With this government, we are at odds all the time. We are polarities. Unions and government are constantly at the other end.

Mr Froese: So are you.

Mr Marchese: That's not true.

It's sad because it means we, the workers, and society, lose in the end. I say to you, go and negotiate a deal with the federal government. There is money there to be had so that we can support our workers in this province. Go and negotiate a deal. Stop blaming the federal Liberal government on this one. Negotiate a deal.

Furthermore, I would say to you, this bill doesn't deal with better wages for workers, better training for apprentices, better provincial protections for them, better ratios of journey person to apprentice. It doesn't do that. Therefore, the bill is flawed. Something gives about this bill that people should mistrust.

I want to remind the public who are watching that these ministers and these men and women on the other side are clothed in oil and you've got to wash the oil to see them clearly. I urge you to urge them that we have public hearings in order for our concerns on this side of the House to be raised; not just our concerns but the concerns of people in those trades. They need to be heard. We need widespread hearings across Ontario, and I hope this government delivers on that.

The Speaker: It being nearly 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Tuesday.

The House adjourned at 2127.

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Second Session, 36th Parliament

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Deuxième session, 36^e législature

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Tuesday 13 October 1998

Mardi 13 octobre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 13 October 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 13 octobre 1998

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBER FOR NICKEL BELT

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received from the chief election officer and laid upon the table a certificate of the by-election in the electoral district of Nickel Belt.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):

"Mr Claude L. DesRosiers

"Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

"Room 104, Legislative Building

"Queen's Park

"Toronto, Ontario

"M7A 1A2

"Dear Mr DesRosiers:

"A writ of election dated the 24th day of August 1998 was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario and was addressed to Jean Parri, returning officer for the electoral district of Nickel Belt, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Nickel Belt in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Floyd Laughren, who since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Nickel Belt has resigned his seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Nickel Belt on the first day of October 1998, Blain Morin has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election dated the 10th day of October 1998, which is now edged of record in my office.

"Warren R. Bailie

"Chief election officer

"Toronto, October 12, 1998."

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Blain Morin, member-elect for the electoral district of Nickel Belt, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat.

The Speaker: Let the member take his seat.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): For many years I've been working with outdoor enthusiasts to

change the regulations with regard to all-terrain vehicles. Lobbying, letters and my private member's resolution have all asked that ATVs be regulated in a similar fashion to snowmobiles.

Why? Because ATVs are important and useful vehicles to explore Ontario's vast crown lands. ATVs provide access for many young people and old people with disabilities to experience the crown lands.

The Ministry of Transportation has been conducting an interminable review. It's time for the studying and reviewing to stop and time for the ministry to change the regulations to ones similar to those that regulate our snowmobiles. My private member's resolution has the unanimous support of all political parties. The changes will assist municipalities, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the police.

Clearly, it's time for the government to respond to the Espanola Fish and Game Club, it's time to respond to Mo Welyhorski and his energy, and to stop studying, reviewing and procrastinating and make the changes in the name of safety, access and good sense.

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): The Liberal federal member for Sarnia-Lambton, Roger Gallaway, is currently chairing a committee which is examining if possible Canada's child custody laws. He was heard recently to make comments that lead me to believe he ought to be removed from that post. I have the support of many people who work in the area of family violence. Roger Gallaway claimed that women work at creating an epidemic of false claims about abuse in order to win custody cases. He suggested that women went to shelters with the purpose of trying to establish an abuse case, and he claimed that in most of these cases children's aid societies were not able to substantiate claims of child abuse.

I think in this place we know that children's aid societies have a great difficulty in substantiating those concerns. We need only point to the case of Randal Dooley, the seven-year-old who was killed last week and for whom claims of child abuse in April were not able to be substantiated.

It is very serious when a chair of a federal committee makes prejudicial comments that make it seem that all the submissions that have been made around family violence as an issue in child custody cases are being completely, summarily dismissed by him.

GOOD NEIGHBOURS WEEK

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): As a former president of the Good Neighbours council in my riding, I am pleased to bring to your attention that this week, Thanksgiving week, is also Good Neighbours Week.

Good Neighbours is a community-based, public awareness volunteer campaign that aims to make Ontario's communities safer, stronger, friendlier and more responsive to people in need, especially those who are frail, vulnerable and isolated. The campaign helps communities become safer and friendlier by creating informal volunteer networks that complement professional services already in place and reinforce the values found in caring neighbourhoods. In short, it's designed to encourage people to reach out and help others.

In my home community in Sarnia, the Good Neighbours campaign comes under the umbrella of the Sarnia District Senior Volunteer Community Services. Over the year, we have coordinated a buddy program which involves safety check systems for seniors, using Good Neighbours doorknob hangers. We also had a Good Neighbour of the Month Award which was featured in the local newspaper each month.

Since 1994, my community has organized the Good Neighbours essay, poetry and poster contest for elementary school students. This year's theme was "How Good Neighbours Make a Difference." About 100 students participated.

During the month of June, posters, poetry and essays were displayed in local schools, churches, police and fire stations, libraries, shopping malls, community centres and banks. During this week I urge you to take time to reach out.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Only the Mike Harris government can save the disaster which is about to befall the Sudbury community. Tonight the Sudbury Regional Palliative Care Association will announce at its annual general membership meeting that, with extreme regret, their present operation is no longer sustainable and that it will cease the services available to our community and this region effective December 31. The reason is that the Mike Harris government will not guarantee adequate funding for this service.

It continues to amaze me, but doesn't surprise me, how callous and cruel the Mike Harris government can be. Everyone in this province has a right to die with dignity. Our Sudbury palliative care association has been the model for this province to follow. It coordinates 250 volunteers who gave in excess of 12,000 hours of volunteer time in the last year alone.

The people of our region have a passionate belief that our community is richer and more humane because of the services provided by this association, and they want the Mike Harris government to commit stable and adequate funding to it immediately.

Will Mike Harris show he cares? Will Cam Jackson, Minister of Long-Term Care, finally return the unanswered phone calls and commit the funding immediately? The clock is ticking, both on the services and this association. Mike Harris and his government can save it. Provide the funding now.

1340

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): This Tory government has cut millions of dollars from the operating budgets of hospitals in northern Ontario. Today, the fax machine in the Premier's office will be buzzing with activity. My constituents in Cochrane North will be faxing this message directly to Premier Harris:

"Now that our predicament has been brought to your attention, what has our government done to alleviate the problem of doctor shortage in Kapuskasing?"

This past May, thousands of letters were delivered personally to the Premier to ask that this government respond to this crisis. Since May, nothing has changed. The people of Kapuskasing are still confronted with a dire shortage of doctors in our community.

Why is the Mike Harris government dragging its feet on health care in northern Ontario? It's plain to see that this government's attacks on our public health care system are hurting patient care. People across Ontario know it's wrong to cut health care to pay for the Harris government's income tax scheme, which benefits only the wealthiest people in this province.

We're still asking this government to take action, not just to pay lip service. In Kapuskasing and throughout all of Cochrane North, we see first-hand how this Conservative government is dragging its feet on health care.

I want to take this time to thank Mariette Guilotte and Jeannette Leonard for their hard work in making sure that this government does not forget the urgency of this issue. Along with my constituents in Kapuskasing, we will work to ensure that there are enough doctors working and living in our community to take care of the people there.

HATE CRIMES

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Last Thursday, after an emotional, heartfelt debate by all three political parties, this House gave approval in principle to a private member's bill put forward by my colleague Ted Chudleigh, the member for Halton North, to establish a Holocaust Memorial Day Act.

Tragically, later that same day, an arsonist struck a Jewish school in Nepean. Late last Thursday evening, just a few hours after Yom Kippur, the Jewish holiday of atonement, École Maimonides was struck by an arsonist. Thanks to the quick, professional and dedicated efforts of the Nepean Fire Department, the financial damage was limited to about \$40,000.

This crime, undoubtedly motivated by hatred and anti-Semitism, is troubling for two reasons. As the school

principal, Rabbi Menachem Blum, said: "Because of the day, it hurts a lot. Everyone spent the day at synagogue praying."

For such a criminal act to be committed on this holy day, it's not an accident, it's not coincidental.

The second reason this act causes such concern is that the school was similarly targeted in 1994. This has happened before. This type of crime must be condemned.

The school is the only Hebrew-French immersion day school in Canada, and its educational achievements have been called a model for all of Canada.

Unfortunately, the school requires major renovations. An emergency fire fundraising drive beginning October 20 has been established, with two members of the Ottawa-Carleton community having graciously offered to participate in a matching grants campaign in which every donation will be matched.

I know our community will come together to support this effort because we will not let those who propagate hate crimes in our community win.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'd like to read a letter sent to Ernie Eves, the finance minister:

"The city and region have requested restructuring money predicated on their co-operative merging of regional and city administration. The province says it does not qualify under the Municipal Act because there has not been any...restructuring. Then change the Municipal Act! The receipt of these dollars would go a very, very long way to resolving the mess we are now in, and the...political price to be paid by area Tory MPPs. I did not leave my career to be a one-term MPP....

Let me continue: "The entire business and residential community is outraged, and my city and region are being ravaged."

You would think I wrote this letter. But no, it was the member for Hamilton Mountain to the finance minister. I was glad to see that we now have the government members finally agreeing with what the opposition has been saying as to Hamilton-Wentworth being shafted by the Harris government — \$27 million.

The member for Hamilton Mountain wrote this letter, but frankly, it is not good enough for local Tory members to plead with the Minister of Finance to save their political careers. That is not going to cut it. We have a massive problem: high taxes for both residential and businesses.

Finally, government members understand what their own ministers are doing to us. It is not good enough. The last-minute pleas are not going to help. But I'm glad to see that the government backbenchers finally agree with the opposition that Hamilton-Wentworth is getting screwed.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I rise to call the house's attention to the fact that a grade 7 student at Duntroon school, Heather Maybury, of her own accord,

initiated a petition drive at that school which is not in order for the House but I think is heartfelt and interesting in the fact that 101 signatures from students were put on the petition. It says:

"As a student at Duntroon Central School, I, for one, believe that Duntroon should be kept open. This petition may help us keep our school open."

I want to submit this petition, along with eight letters written by grade 2 students about their school, to the Minister of Education and Training. These children do not want to have their schools closed. They do not want to lose their friends and have to travel by bus to a school at a great distance.

The point is that that school is full. It is at capacity. The only reason it is being listed for closure is because the government funding formula does not provide the board with enough funding to keep this school open. It's about time this government recognized that its funding formula doesn't work to maintain neighbourhood schools.

BRAMPTON EXCELSIORS

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): I just wanted to present to the Legislature today another great moment in Brampton sports history. In an 1874 Dominion Day lacrosse match, the Brampton Excelsiors outclassed and defeated a team from the Six Nations reserve with their superior running and dodging skills.

History repeated itself on September 15 of this year, only a different team was outclassed this time. The Excelsiors christened the new Brampton Sports Centre by winning the Canadian Lacrosse Association's Mann Cup championship before over 3,500 jubilant Brampton fans. The Excelsiors won the best-of-seven series four games to two over the Coquitlam Adanacs of British Columbia.

This year's Excelsiors were the product of a five-year rebuilding effort by general manager Shane Sanderson and coach Bob McMahon, who inherited the team in 1994 after losing several of its key players.

The Excelsiors were led in their victory by series MVP goalie Pat O'Toole and captain Mike Hasen. Scoring standout Jim Veltman said it best: "These are the hardest-working guys I've ever played with and when the chips were down, these guys just kept coming. We wore [the Adanacs] down."

On behalf of the Ontario Legislature, congratulations to the Mann Cup champion Brampton Excelsiors. We look forward to seeing you repeat as national champions next year.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on resources development and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 35, An Act to create jobs and protect consumers by promoting low-cost energy through competition, to protect the environment, to provide for pensions and to make related amendments to certain Acts.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 24, 1998, the bill is ordered for third reading.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that notwithstanding standing order 95(d), Mr Bradley and Mr Duncan exchange places in the order of precedence for private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm on October 13 and 14, 1998, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour please say "aye."

All those opposed please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

1350

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOMELESSNESS

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Last week we heard members of the community outline, in emotional detail really, the plight of the homeless in Ontario. It's a problem that exists right across Ontario. We're facing a very desperate situation this winter, and I think all of us dread the effects of homelessness as the cold weather comes on.

We had the government's report on Friday on the provincial task force on homelessness. Frankly, as we face a crisis in homelessness, I think it's fair to say that most people have responded to the report as being inadequate.

My question to the minister is this: Is this what we can expect will be the answer to this winter's homeless problem from the Harris government?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): As the honourable member well knows, this particular task force was one component of a number of steps that we have taken and will continue to take as we help support community agencies and the municipalities in dealing with the serious problem of people who find themselves homeless.

Mr Phillips: The problem is that what has to happen is more effort. The effort that has taken place in the past has led to this problem. We have a major problem of homelessness in the province of Ontario.

This morning we had another community group outline a related problem, and that is child poverty, which can only be described as a national tragedy. You know that child poverty is growing. I gather from the comments from the group this morning that it appears to be growing faster in Ontario.

It is your government that has cut support for parents of children on social assistance. It's your government that essentially has dried up social housing. There is no construction of social housing in the province. The report that came out just last week said there's no social housing being constructed in Ontario. You have essentially said to the municipalities, "It is now your problem to deal with child poverty."

The question is, what effort are you planning immediately to deal with this crisis of child poverty?

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect, this government has never said the issue of child poverty is the responsibility of the municipalities. I wish he'd get his facts straight.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I know the honourable member would like us all to believe that somehow or other this is a very simple issue, that somehow or other the cause of homelessness, for example, is all to be laid at the feet of this government. But I'd like to remind the honourable member that the rate of homelessness in this province went up during the time his government was there; it went up during the time that welfare rates were increasing.

Rather than getting into an argument about how we make life pleasant or nice for people who find themselves in difficult circumstances, the argument, the question, the policy objective is to try to give those individuals, whether they are on welfare, whether they have mental illness problems, whether they have substance abuse problems, the supports they need to get on with their lives, off welfare, and get them into paid jobs.

Mr Phillips: I think those who are watching understand that we are trying to make their lives better and nicer and more comfortable.

You say that you have not loaded it on to municipalities. You put social housing 100% on to the property taxes. You have loaded social assistance on to the property taxes. It's you who have made that decision; by the way, contrary to your own Who Does What panel. That was the group that said who should have responsibility for

what issues. David Crombie said, "Don't put social housing, don't put social assistance on to the property tax."

I say to you, Minister, that the situation is desperate. We have a respected group outlining the problem of child poverty, which is a disgrace for all of us, to be seeing those numbers.

My leader, Dalton McGuinty, put out a document called *First Steps*. It outlined several proposals. One of them was to provide some assistance for children who are on social assistance, the ones facing the most desperate circumstances.

The Speaker: Question.

Mr Phillips: Will you look at that recommendation and will you come back to the House with a plan for dealing with child poverty?

Hon Mrs Ecker: If the honourable member had had the correspondence shared with him from his leader's office, he would know that we have responded to Mr McGuinty's task force on children.

Second, I was quite frankly a little disappointed because most of the things he recommends in that report are things that we have already done or are in the process of completing.

Third, the honourable member might well want to look at this report that he is quoting in the House a little more carefully. The data they are talking about are data that existed before this government came into office.

Finally, we have fewer children on welfare today than we had when the previous government was in place, 133,000 fewer people on welfare, and the reason for that is because their parents have gone into jobs. We start from the belief that people are better off and their families are better off when people are in paid employment, and our goals, our welfare reforms, have indeed been achieving that effect.

The other point is, we continue to pay 80% of social assistance in this province. We think that's an appropriate backup for our —

The Speaker: Questions, official opposition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'll trust the judgment of the community.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Your question is to?

Mr Phillips: The Minister of Health. It has to do with the problems our hospitals are facing in funding.

On Friday, the Ontario Hospital Association released its report. They indicate in very clear terms that hospitals are facing a significant financial problem, and they indicate very clearly that it is getting worse and worse. They indicate that next year, in fact the year we're into right now, the deficits at the hospitals will be \$250 million.

The hospitals are faced with choices: Do they continue to go further and further into debt or do they cut services to the people of Ontario? That is an impossible dilemma for our hospitals and our hospital boards.

Will you now acknowledge, Minister, that our hospitals are facing a serious crisis in financing, and will you announce steps to deal with this crisis problem in our hospitals?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): As the member opposite already may or may not be aware, we are working with the Ontario Hospital Association and we have formed a hospital financial issues advisory group under the JPPC.

As David MacKinnon, the gentleman at the OHA, has indicated, these deficits are issues that hospitals have dealt with over a long period of time. They are problems of long standing, and we want to make sure that in working in partnership with the Ontario Hospital Association, we at the Ministry of Health and this government can find some short-term and some long-term solutions to the issue of deficits, which have been part of hospital life for years and years under all three governments.

Mr Phillips: The problem of course is that people who are in need of hospital care face the crisis today.

You are familiar with an individual in a hospital in the area that I represent who had a brain hemorrhage. She was 30 weeks pregnant. They made 21 phone calls to desperately try and get her a bed somewhere where they could provide services. They couldn't do that. She was required to travel. They couldn't get an air ambulance. The only bed they could find was in Hamilton. They took her from Scarborough to Hamilton and, as you know, she passed away, tragically. Fortunately, they were able to save the baby, but they actually had to get a doctor from another Hamilton hospital to come to that hospital to perform the necessary surgery.

I say to you, the hospitals are facing today serious financial problems.

The Speaker: Question.

Mr Phillips: Will you agree to immediately work with the hospitals to restore the necessary funding to ensure that people in Ontario have the right —

The Speaker: Minister of Health.

Hon Mrs Witmer: As you know, our priority is to ensure that patients get the highest level of care. That's exactly why we have set up the task force with the Ontario Hospital Association. As you also know, we have made available to hospitals \$2 billion to assist them with the restructuring costs that they incur. We've also set aside money to the tune of about \$300 million to assist them with the year 2000 problem. We also continue to meet with them to address the very issues that you're speaking about, because we want to make sure we can continue to meet the problems and deal with the issues and we can continue to provide the highest level of service possible.

1400

Mr Phillips: I think the minister will recall that most of us on the opposition side for months and months, in fact since you began cutting the hospital budgets, have said it was going to create a problem. I appreciate that a month ago you finally set up, in response to that pressure, a joint committee. I would just say to you, frankly, it was very late. People have suffered as a result of it. I appreciate that

the computers may work January 1, 2000; I understand that. But people today are faced with serious problems as they go to hospitals.

Once again, my question is this. This is an emergency. The hospital association said it is a big problem and getting significantly worse. Will you this week agree that you will meet with the OHA and come forward with a plan that ensures that the people of Ontario have the care they deserve when they visit their local hospitals?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I know that most people didn't realize we had a task force set up, but we do, because we recognized long before today and long before last Friday that we need to continue to work co-operatively with the Ontario hospitals, as we have. We are determined that we can address the needs that the hospitals have. That's why I say the task force that has been set up is one that is going to identify in the short term some solutions to the problems hospitals have, and also identify some long-term solutions.

Mr MacKinnon has admitted this is a problem of long standing. I can go back to a quote from the Toronto Star on September 21, 1988, where it indicates that Health Minister Caplan has ordered the hospitals to balance their budgets, saying the government will not bail out debt-ridden hospitals. I can assure you we have not indicated that to hospitals —

The Speaker: New question, third party.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): My question is to the Minister of Housing. Last Friday at 3:30 pm your government released a report on homelessness that can only be described, in my view, as pitiful. You obviously agree; otherwise you would not have tried to bury it before the long weekend.

What the homeless need are homes. Instead they got a catalogue of things your government supposedly has done or is doing. But you left a few things out. You forgot the 22% cut to social assistance; you forgot your gutting of rent control; you forgot your revoking of the Rental Housing Protection Act; and you forgot your rules that cut many homeless people. Your government has most willfully made the situation for the poor and the homeless worse.

Minister, are you seriously claiming that your cuts to social assistance and your attempts to push up rents have nothing to do with the crisis of homelessness?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): As social assistance and supportive housing belong to the Minister of Community and Social Services, I'll defer the question to her.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): I would like to point out to the member that the social assistance rates in this province are 16% above the average of the rates of the other provinces. It is a generous program, and I think it should be, here in Ontario.

Secondly, the financial support for those people with disabilities in this province who are in financial need is

about 47% above the other provinces, again very generous support.

It's also important to point out to the honourable member that if he seriously thinks adjusting welfare rates upward is going to solve the issue of homelessness, all he has to do is look back at the record of his own government and the previous government before that, where they did increase welfare rates and, unfortunately, homelessness increased.

Mr Marchese: That's why I asked the question to the Minister of Housing, because we argue that what the homeless need are homes, and we continually get another minister talking about the great things they have done.

The Golden report in fact clearly says that one of the contributing factors that have made people homeless is the cuts to social assistance, yet she denies it, and in fact she argues they're very generous.

Minister, one of the themes of your report is that municipalities should take the lead in housing the homeless and that you should be helping them. But your so-called tenant protection package, which the Minister of Housing knows about, took away a major power municipalities had to preserve affordable housing. It's called the Rental Housing Protection Act. This act allowed municipalities to say no to developers and landlords who want to demolish affordable housing or convert it to expensive condominiums. Now that's gone. It's open season on existing housing for the poor and the homeless thanks to your government.

Minister, if you are so concerned about helping municipalities preserve affordable housing, will you give them back the power to prevent demolitions and conversions that you took away from them?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Municipalities still have the authority to oppose that. I would like to also remind the honourable members that the changes my colleague the Minister of Housing has made will help encourage rental housing support in this province, something the two previous governments did not help to do.

The other issue is that it might be helpful if the honourable member across the way helped us address Ottawa, because if they would stop preventing moving forward with housing reform, that would also be of assistance.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: We continue to support municipalities in looking for ways to improve the issue of homelessness. One of the things Mr Carroll's task force pointed out, and which Anne Golden's task force is pointing out, is that many individuals have difficulties and barriers that mean they lose the housing they have or they can't maintain the housing they have, either through addiction or mental health issues.

One of the recommendations that has come through very clearly from both municipalities and the organizations which help people who are homeless is that we need supports to have those people linked up with. Whether it's mental health or substance abuse, they need those linkages. Our plan is going to do that.

Mr Marchese: I want to thank the minister of homelessness for participating in this debate, and I also want to thank this minister for —

The Speaker: No. Order. There is the Minister of Housing and so on. I don't believe there's a minister for that.

Mr Marchese: Well, I thank the Minister of Housing for not participating. I want to say to this minister that they, in a most cavalier and callous way, have a way of blaming victims and have a way of shifting their responsibilities to the federal government and to the municipalities.

I want to read something to you, Minister, from the Golden interim report, a report that actually helps us come to grips with this crisis. It says that families with kids are the fastest-growing segment of the homeless population. It also says, contrary to your report, that housing them will take government action. I quote from page 47, where she says, "The cost of building a new two- to three-bedroom unit is prohibitive without major subsidies." The homeless need homes, but you offer them nothing.

Minister, what do you say to the homeless families, "Make a Kingston Road motel your permanent home"? Is that what you have to tell them?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member well knows that is not the answer we are giving those families who may find themselves homeless. If we didn't want to assist the municipalities, we wouldn't be spending \$100 million to help with the housing issue; we wouldn't have had a task force that is going to be recommending additional spending to help the municipalities.

We have 80% of the emergency hostels and we continue to pay that share. We think that's appropriate to help support our municipalities. We take 80% of the domiciliary hostels; we pay the biggest share of that because that's a very important support. We also have supportive housing which this government has assumed 100% responsibility for because many individuals who find themselves homeless require additional support to keep them in their housing.

There are many things we have done, and we will continue to work with our municipalities to try and assist people who find themselves in homeless situations to link up with appropriate housing.

1410

NURSE PRACTITIONERS

Mr Blain Morin (Nickel Belt): My question is to the Minister of Health. You know that the expanding use of nurse practitioners is an effective way of solving the problem of medically underserved areas in this province. It's true especially in my riding of Nickel Belt, in areas like Foleyet, Salter as well as Gogama. Underserved areas in northern Ontario need the services of nurse practitioners. Nurse practitioners are highly trained health care professionals who focus on disease prevention and are able to provide primary care for minor illnesses and stable chronic illnesses.

I represent an underserved community and I have a direct question for you, Minister. You announced \$5 million last spring for nurse practitioners but not a penny of that money has been spent. Where is the money you promised but have not spent?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): First of all, on behalf of I'm sure all my colleagues, we'd like to extend our congratulations to you. We're very pleased that you're joining us here today.

Having said that, I had the pleasure of visiting Nickel Belt and I certainly can appreciate some of the unique needs of your constituency. We were very pleased earlier this year that we were able to ensure that nurse practitioners were able to practise in Ontario. The \$5 million is almost at a point where it can be announced. We are presently —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Supplementary.

Mr Blain Morin: During my election campaign, the nurse practitioners in my area wrote a letter asking about your commitment to nurse practitioners. It is a good question because your commitment is empty, as are your promises. First, we have no indication that you are flowing the money to nurse practitioners. Second, even when it has been announced, the money is going to community health clinics in the south. Third, we have about 50 nurse practitioners in northern Ontario who do not have positions equal to their training and ability. At the same time, most of northern Ontario is an underserved area.

You have ignored the requests for funding from physicians and nurse practitioners who would like to set up collaborating practices. Minister, why don't you live up to the rhetoric and commit today to expand the use of nurse practitioners in Nickel Belt and other northern Ontario underserved areas?

Hon Mrs Witmer: First of all, let me explain the answer to the first response. We are presently just completing the identification of the communities that will be the beneficiaries of the \$5-million announcement for nurse practitioners.

But let me in the interim perhaps share some information with you that indicates the tremendous progress that our government has taken. This is taken from the newsletter of the RNAO, which is the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario. This was in September-October 1998, where they say, "This has been a great year in the nursing community's efforts to gain recognition for nurse practitioners."

They indicate, "Health minister Witmer informed RNAO of \$5 million of permanent funding for primary care nurse practitioner utilization."

I can assure you that the nurses are extremely pleased with the progress our government has made.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Minister, I can't believe you're being so cynical. Such hollow words that you give us. Of course the RNAO in October-November were pleased, because we all collaborated in this

House in making sure that the nurse practitioner legislation was passed. Your job was then to make sure the funding was in place to make that real. You haven't done that.

Now, as we told you before in this House, we have a copy of the letter that Judith Wright, your assistant deputy minister, has sent out saying that in the future you intend to withdraw your support for nurse practitioner education programs. It says clearly that you are going to reduce the enrolment in those programs and you are going to reduce the number of sites for the programs.

Your government's support for nurse practitioner education and support for nurse practitioners should be growing, not waning. Five million dollars is all you've promised and it would take about \$40 million to actually meet the underserved needs.

Minister, you tell us today: Where is the money, and are you going to cut the education programs?

Hon Mrs Witmer: First of all, let me also share from Judith Wright's letter. She indicates in the letter that nursing issues are of significant interest to the government. The ministry is committed to NPs.

I'm very pleased to say that we will continue to provide the opportunities and we will continue to ensure that nursing is valued in this province.

As you know, we have set up the nursing task force. This was in response to the request from the nurses. In fact, I think the nurses will tell you that this government has done more in one year for nurses than any government in the history of this province. We had many, many meetings and we have made many commitments and we are moving forward.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): My question is to the Minister of Housing. I'm going to give you one more chance to redeem yourself, Minister, now that you've had time to reflect on your colleague's response to the crisis of homelessness.

Your policy to eliminate social housing, your colleague's policy to reduce welfare income by 22% and your Minister of Health's disregard for the needs of the mentally ill, as you know, are totally disgraceful. Since you were elected, there has been no new money for special-needs housing for the mentally ill.

It is apparent that it is your government policy that is the main contributor to the homeless crisis. Will you today request that your Premier set up a cabinet crisis committee comprising the Minister of Health, the Minister of Housing — yourself — and the Minister of Community and Social Services to address this crisis on hand?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I refer the question to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): We already have a committee which is advising this government on further reforms to the social housing area. It would perhaps be of assistance if the

honourable member across the way would advise Ottawa that they could help by making the decisions they are not making as to how we can rationalize social housing in a way that will actually help increase the supply and the support for people who require that.

I would like to remind the honourable member that this government has taken many steps, not only on the side of emergency shelter, which I have talked about previously in this House, with the increased funding and the financial backup we give to municipalities, but also with our other reforms. Our reforms to the tenant protection system, our reforms to restoring fairness to the property tax system, and our reforms to put limits on development charges to streamline the planning and approvals process are actually resulting in an increase in rental housing starts in this province this year and an increase in housing starts. I think those are both encouraging trends, as well as the encouraging trend of more people working and more people off welfare working. All of these things are designed to help address the issue of homelessness.

1420

Mr Curling: It's appalling to know we have a Minister of Housing who has refused to address any housing issue. As a matter of fact, he should resign, because he doesn't do any work anyhow.

When you have a Minister of Community and Social Services who stands up and tells us that they are making steps, I say your steps are backward steps, not progressive steps. The Carroll report addresses nothing for the homeless. It does nothing at all. It's a useless exercise. I know it's too late now to save Edmond Yu, but there are thousands of people who are homeless, who are on the streets, who are seeking a place to live. The Minister of Health, the minister of social services and the Minister of Housing contribute nothing to this problem.

Could you then stand up today and ask your Premier to put together a cabinet crisis committee?

Hon Mrs Ecker: If the member thinks another administrative committee is going to solve the issue, he's sadly mistaken. This province has already tried the solution of government going out and trying to build housing. The previous government tried it. The government before that tried it. What we ended up with was millions of dollars more debt for this province to have to deal with, and that's one of the biggest threats to social spending in this province, I have to tell you. Secondly, we ended up with units that cost the taxpayers more than if the private sector had built them.

Based on the last 10 years where they did that, where they increased welfare rates, we know that here we are with a bigger problem with homelessness than what existed previously. We know that those two responses to this problem do not work. That's why we are focusing on supports that will actually help those individuals in terms of mental health, in terms of substance abuse, in terms of emergency shelter, in terms of giving municipalities more financial support, and also in terms of giving them more flexibility in how they use that financial support, which is something they told us very strongly in the consultations

would help them to do a better job of meeting the needs of people —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, third party.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the minister responsible for children's issues. Last week I listened to the Minister of Natural Resources try and shirk his responsibility for putting guns in the hands of children. Today I want to appeal to you to act on behalf of Ontario, on behalf of our kids, and fight to reverse this dangerous and frankly stupid policy of your government.

Over the weekend there were two accidents involving youth and guns. A 13-year-old boy in Alberta accidentally shot himself in the hand while he was goose hunting. He was out hunting with his father and another adult, and he blew off his fingers with a 12-gauge shotgun. Here in Ontario a 17-year-old boy died this Sunday after being shot by another youth in a hunting accident.

Minister, how many children have to die? What have you done to protect the children of this province? Have you fought to have this policy reversed?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): These hunting tragedies and accidents with any kind of firearm are always very, very serious, and they're serious to every member of this House when we hear about such an accident.

I think this member knows very well that today children as young as 12 years of age are able to use firearms because of the federal C-17 and it's reinforced in their new bill, C-68. All our province has done under the Minister of Natural Resources is ensure that those young people are qualified and know how to handle a gun if they choose to do it, which they can legally. It's the federal C-17 and C-68 which allow them to handle guns in the first place.

Ms Lankin: Minister, you are wrong. I told you in this House last week that the OPP have confirmed that they did not give permits to children under the age of 15 in this province, despite the federal law. Why? Because there was no reason for them to have a permit, because they couldn't hunt. It is your government that is putting guns in the hands of children. What is it going to take to get you to reverse this policy?

Minister, I want to read to you your mission from your own children's secretariat Web site. You have a responsibility here. As the minister responsible for children, your role is to review all new government legislation, regulations and policies. You're supposed to consider how and if these measures would promote the well-being of children.

Tell me how sending a 12-year-old child out with a shotgun is going to protect children. Tell me how having them supervised by another teenager is going to promote the well-being of children. Will you stand up for Ontario's children? Will you stand up to your cabinet? Will you fight to have this policy reversed?

Hon Mrs Marland: I am going to refer this to Mr Eves.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I would just ask the member for Beaches-Woodbine to take into account several things. Obviously this is a very tragic and serious situation that the OPP is investigating. I think it behooves all members of the House not to politicize this process.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: Quite frankly, the three chortling behind you in the NDP may think this is funny. We on this side of the House don't happen to think it's so funny. We have the OPP investigating. I think it would behoove us all to wait until the OPP concludes the results of its investigation to find out exactly what the circumstances were.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Hon Mr Eves: It would appear that the incident happened on a Sunday, when nobody should be having a firearm in eastern Ontario anyway unless they happen to be a native person on their own property. Did the individuals involved have a licence? These are some of the questions that come to my mind. Were they under adult supervision at the time? Did they take part in a hunter safety program? All these answers and more will come to the floor when the OPP concludes its investigation, and I'm sure the government and the ministers responsible in this government will take the appropriate action once the investigation is completed.

1430

MOTORCYCLE GANGS

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): My question is to the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services. It concerns the media report in eastern Ontario.

As you know, on September 30 the Ontario Provincial Police, in co-operation with the police from Montreal, detained and charged members of the Quebec Rock Machine motorcycle gang. That happens to be close to my riding of Belleville. My constituents have watched the problem escalate in Quebec and seen it grow out of control, and they are very concerned about these kinds of gangs. I do not want this to lead into Ontario the way it has in Quebec. The bike gangs have been active in drug trafficking, theft, assaults and threatening law-abiding citizens. Minister, tell the House today what action the government has been taking to improve that situation.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I thank the member for Quinte for the question, and I can advise him that Ontario is sending a strong message on this issue: Ontario is closed to biker gangs involved in criminal activity.

The OPP has a dedicated unit called the special squad which investigates outlaw motorcycle gang criminal activity. Last year, this government doubled the number of OPP officers assigned to the special squad to combat illegal biker gangs, and in the 1998 budget we went even further, increasing the number of officers from seven to

20. We have invested an immediate \$3.4 million this year and \$2.7 million in following years to work with 16 local police services and the RCMP to crack down on biker gangs involved in illegal activities such as fraud, drug trafficking, assault, extortion and prostitution.

Mr Rollins: I would like to thank the Solicitor General for letting the House and the people of Ontario know that our government has taken considerable action in addressing outlaw biker gangs.

Minister, shutting down illegal biker gang crime in Ontario is clearly a public safety priority. What steps has this government taken to ensure that our policing services are most effectively used in dealing with this criminal activity?

Hon Mr Runciman: Our government supported the call by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police for a national strategy on outlaw motorcycle gangs. Ontario coordinates joint force projects and the sharing of criminal intelligence information with other federal and provincial jurisdictions. This is one measure to ensure that Ontario tax dollars are directed most effectively at reducing illegal biker gang crime.

Ontario is also using proceeds-of-crime laws to hit biker gangs where it hurts: in their pocketbooks. A joint force operation such as Project Dismantle involved 300 officers and netted 1,355 charges, the seizure of a \$150,000 clubhouse, the seizure of assets including \$10,000 cash, \$300,000 worth of vehicles, \$20,000 worth of motorcycles and over \$1.2 million in drugs.

I'm proud of our efforts to date and I want to assure my colleagues in this House that we will continue our efforts to combat this type of organized crime.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is to the Minister of Education. The county of Renfrew is the largest county in Ontario. It is nearly 3,000 square miles in size, or almost 8,000 square kilometres. Under your new education funding formula, the public school board in the province's largest county, namely Renfrew, does not qualify for the rural and remote grant factor.

Minister, could you explain to the parents, students and staff of the public school board in Renfrew county how it is that they do not qualify for the rural and remote grant factor?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): There are various criteria involved. The small schools are schools of less than a certain number of students, I think some 200 students, roughly. The remote and rural factor has to do with distance from major centres, such as Ottawa, for example. Ottawa would be a major centre, and Toronto and I believe London, and other major factors.

I will say to the member that those boards that do qualify and those schools that do qualify have the benefit of about \$56 million for small schools and over \$90 million for remote and rural factors across the province. This money is to assist those small schools and those schools in

remote and rural areas with additional costs such as heating and lighting and running a small school.

Mr Conway: People living in communities like Chalk River and Deep River and Rolphton and Palmer Rapids and Wilno and Barry's Bay and Round Lake want to know, since they are further from Ottawa than Kingston why they would not qualify for a granting factor that the public school board in Kingston qualifies for. A more rural and far-flung board than the Renfrew public board is hard to imagine.

A second question, Minister, is this: My sources at home tell me that the public school board in the North Bay-Parry Sound area has qualified for a very generous rural and remote factor. Are you prepared to table in this House a comparison for this year, the fiscal year 1998-99, of all the provincial grants being paid, by category, to the North Bay-Parry Sound public school board with, for example, the Renfrew public board to make sure that a sweetheart deal has not been made for the Premier and the Minister of Finance to the obvious disadvantage of people living in places like Rolphton, Wilno and Palmer Rapids?

Hon David Johnson: These allocations — a small-school allocation which pertains to an elementary school must be eight kilometres away from another nearest school, for example, and the remote and rural allocation, I believe, is 150 kilometres away from a defined city — are all done on a fair and open basis. They're exactly the same for all boards. This information is known to all the boards.

Mr Conway: Table that list. I want to see the list. I want to see the line-by-line —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Minister?

Hon Mr Johnson: I'll simply say that I think it's unfortunate that there is this type of innuendo and allegation in a formula that's fair and evenly applied across Ontario. The board has all this information. I suggest to the member that if he wants any of this information, it's fully available.

TUITION FEES

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training as well. This week, students all across Ontario are going to be speaking out about crushing debt loads and increasing tuition for college and university students.

Your government's per capita funding for universities ranks at the bottom of all provinces in Canada. It's one of the worst in North America. On other issues you're quick to point out about how Ontario ought to match the national average, at least when it comes to cuts. But when it comes to college and university funding, instead of moving towards the national average you cut \$400 million in funding, and that caused a drastic increase in tuition. This money went to finance your phony tax scheme, a tax scheme that benefits the most well-off.

Minister, will you explain to students why your tax scheme is a higher priority than lowering tuition and moving Ontario up to the national average?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): What I would explain to students and to the people of Ontario is that this government has made a series of focused investments in post-secondary education, investments such as the student opportunity trust fund, such as the access to opportunities program. These are investments to assist students and to assist the post-secondary institutions, and, I might say, there have been a series of tax expenditures as well.

The interesting aspect is that when you add up all of these investments — expenditures, tax expenditures — the amount of spending in 1998-99 is almost \$3.3 billion, which is about \$300 million more than what was invested in 1994-95 by the NDP government. That's what I'll tell the people of Ontario.

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Mr Lessard: Minister, you just don't get it. Your funding cuts and tuition increases are sending students further into debt. If you don't want to commit to improving this situation, this is something positive that you can do. As you know, the last federal Liberal budget extended the waiting period for student bankruptcy from two years to 10 years. Libby Davies, the NDP critic for post-secondary education in Ottawa, has introduced legislation that would restore bankruptcy protection for students who are now being crushed by these debt loads. Will you join with me in calling on the federal Liberal government to pass this bill repealing the discriminatory changes to the Bankruptcy Act so that students can be treated fairly?

Hon David Johnson: I think the member opposite has put his finger on a valid source of concern, and that is the federal government. I think we all agree with that. I notice that this week the organization the Canadian Federation of Students is petitioning the federal government and indicating that in the budget in February the federal government has done very little to help students in Ontario. So I think we should join together and approach the federal government.

I will also say to the member that you know what per cent of student debt is associated with federal loans: 70% of student debt is associated with federal loans. The province of Ontario is more apt to grant outright financial assistance. The federal government is the one generating all the loans that students have to pay back.

CROP INSURANCE

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. You remember that back in August a very severe hailstorm struck our area, wiping out several apple farmers. It was centred on Grafton but it took a wide swath throughout Northumberland, Durham and Quinte.

Minister, you demonstrated significant leadership by meeting with the affected growers on October 5. The apple growers were very pleased that you took time to

meet with them. Can you tell the House and the apple farmers in my area what the ministry is doing to help these apple growers recover from this disaster?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank my colleague from Northumberland for joining me when he, myself and our staff met with the apple producers in the area of Northumberland, Durham and Quinte.

The ministry, along with the federal government, supports the crop insurance and the safety net programs by contributing to the premiums, and also by supporting Agricorp, which is a group of farmers operating the safety nets for farmers. Ministry staff in the affected area will continue to monitor the situation and work closely with the growers on recommendations for handling the harvesting of the hail-damaged crop. We will continue to work with Agricorp, the Ontario Apple Marketing Commission and indeed with the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada minister and ministry to help those in the affected areas so they will have financing in place for next year's crop production.

Mr Galt: Minister, previous governments have come out with rather quick-fix programs that had very little benefit for the long term. Can you share with the House that this government is strongly committed to a safety net program that is both sustainable and efficient and one that the apple growers will buy into in the future?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Through Agricorp, which is an arm's-length agency as I mentioned before, they have the net income stabilization account and also self-directed risk management which is available to our apple growers. It's a three-year pilot project which is only available in Ontario and which has been working reasonably well. Hail and drought are just some of the unique risks facing Ontario farmers.

Farmers work hard in partnership with provincial and federal governments, sometimes with their banks, in order to meet the programs. Efforts to refine these initiatives continue, and we must not undermine — I emphasize, we must not undermine — those efforts through ad hoc funding programs, to which the federal government agrees. Producers themselves acknowledge that ad hoc assistance in lieu of crop insurance and safety nets would indeed see many of the wrong responses and the wrong message to our farmers.

Agricorp, the crown agency run by farmers, is indeed adjusting to meet the needs of not only the apple producers but all farmers facing the safety net issue.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance and it has to do with property taxes. There continues to be considerable confusion and concern out there in Ontario around property taxes, and it's no surprise. In the last 17 months you have had six different bills that the Legislature has had to deal

with, one bill trying to fix the previous bill. We still have another bill, Bill 61, that has to be dealt with.

As you know, Minister, a year ago we proposed a solution to the problem you're now trying to deal with in Bill 61; that is, the time that people can appeal their assessments. You still don't have this right in Bill 61. You should have adopted our amendment, which would have allowed up to 60 days after people get their final tax bill to appeal their assessment.

Will you now finally admit that you were wrong, we were right, and will you amend your bill so that people in Ontario will have up to 60 days after they get their final tax bill to appeal their assessment?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): The member for Scarborough-Agincourt will know that municipalities send out tax bills. The province of Ontario does not for property taxes.

There is no reason why municipalities shouldn't have had their tax bills out long ago. They could have had them out by the end of August. Some of them did not get them out, quite frankly, till the first week or two in September. That is why we listened to the people and we propose in Bill 61, as the member knows, an extension of the appeal date until October 30.

He will also know that his party, along with the NDP, agreed to pass Bill 61 in one day. They've already taken up one day of debate and now they say they're prepared to pass it expeditiously in an additional two or three days of debate. That's not what you agreed to. Why don't you deliver on your commitment?

Mr Phillips: We thought he'd call the bill the first day back.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Stop the clock.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Al Palladini had to go through this. He knows what it's like. He pretended he wanted his bill early. He had to get mad at you.

The Speaker: Are you heckling me?

Supplementary.

Mr Phillips: I sent the minister a letter. I said our caucus is anxious to deal with Bill 61, the property tax bill. We said we need only two sessional days to deal with the bill. We've never said anything different. If he can prove that, I challenge him. But we sent him a letter, saying: "We continue to feel our amendment to allow up to 60 days is appropriate. But in any event, it seems sensible to deal with the bill quickly."

My point is this: You have caused chaos, Minister. Six bills; it's an embarrassment. One bill has to fix the previous bill. You look foolish on it. Call the bill. Let us get on with it so at least we can have some sense of stability out there. Don't hide. Bring the bill forward. But you look foolish. Six bills and still you will not accept what we proposed 12 months ago and we proposed six months ago. You rejected it. You would not have had to have this bill if you had accepted it.

Will you now get on with the debate so that property taxpayers in the province of Ontario can at least have

some assurance that they'll be able to finally appeal their assessment on a sensible basis?

Hon Mr Eves: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt knows perfectly well that different pieces of legislation are required at different stages of the process as we're bringing in a new assessment system in the province.

I understand that your government didn't have the political intestinal fortitude to do that. I understand that their government didn't have the fortitude to do that. I understand it's a difficult thing to go from a system that's antiquated from 1940, when the latest reassessment was done in some parts of the province, to 1998, some 58 years later. However, we are dealing with it. We're trying to be fair and equitable. All I ask you is, why would you send a letter saying, "Sorry, I told you that you could have the bill in one day but all I want is 300% more time to deal with this expeditiously"? Why would you do that? Why would you renege on the commitment? Don't you figure it's important to pass it in one day, as you agreed? You already wasted the day.

Mr Phillips: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I would ask the minister to prove I ever said we would do that. I said we would deal with the bill. Prove it.

The Speaker: Member for Scarborough-Agincourt, it's not a point of order.

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NIAGARA REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I have a question to the Solicitor General. Last week, his ministry released its report on the Niagara Regional Police Service. That report told him what Niagara regional police officers have been telling him for a good chunk of time now: that the Niagara Regional Police Service is seriously understaffed, and that detectives and people conducting specialized investigations have had to be taken from those criminal investigations to fulfill front-line responsibilities.

The Niagara regional police, with its concern for the health and safety of its members, the health and safety of the community and the effectiveness of policing, has requested an inquiry by the OCC. This was told to them during the hearings on your amendments to the Police Services Act as their safeguard in the event that they had concerns about the adequacy of the level of policing. Well, they do. The delays in response times have increased dramatically because of this shortage of police officers.

Very simply, Solicitor General, will you support those cops from Niagara who simply want their day with the OCC so they can present their case for more police officers, more funding and a restoration of the level of policing that Niagara deserves?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I'm sure the member knows that this is a quasi-judicial body and that they will make a decision on the merits of the case put before them. No Solicitor General in the history of this province

has attempted to intervene in that process, and if one did I'm sure the opposition parties would be on their feet calling for his or her resignation within the bat of an eye.

I certainly do not intend to intrude, and we'll let the process go through its natural course. The civilian commission has a great number of tools available to it and if they think action is merited, that will be forthcoming with their decision on the force itself.

I should point out that this government is doing a number of things to address placing additional police officers on the streets of communities across this province through our new program — \$150 million for the next five years to put 1,000 new police officers on the streets of our communities.

PETITIONS

DENTAL CARE

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): I have a petition which refers to the schedule of dental services for children and people with disabilities that was introduced by the government under the Ontario Works Act and the Ontario Disability Support Program Act.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Delay full implementation of the new dental plan until the requirement for predeterminations is removed, patient confidentiality is protected, the plan emphasizes prevention in oral health care, and the government consults directly with affected patients to ensure the new plan will meet the special needs of children and people with disabilities."

I have affixed my signature.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas most Ontario residents do not have adequate access to effective palliative care in time of need;

"Whereas meeting the needs of Ontarians of all ages for relief of preventable pain and suffering, as well as the provision of emotional and spiritual support, should be a priority to our health care system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to resolve that a task force be appointed to develop a palliative care bill of rights that would assure the best possible treatment, care, protection and support for Ontario citizens and their families in time of need. The task force should include palliative care experts on pain management, community palliative care and ethics in order to determine effective safeguards for the right to life and care of individuals who cannot or who can no longer decide issues of medical care for themselves. The appointed task force would provide interim reports to the

government and the public and continue in existence to review the implementation of its recommendations."

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Mike Harris has imposed skyrocketing taxes on small business owners in Windsor because of his government's downloading debacle;

"Whereas many small business owners in Windsor who pay commercial property taxes face tax increases of more than 100%;

"Whereas the Harris government tax assessment system is confusing, chaotic and an administrative nightmare for municipalities;

"Whereas the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers called the Harris tax assessment system a 'high-risk strategy' that will create 'serious problems' for taxpayers and municipalities; and

"Whereas Windsor small businesses facing massive tax increases will be forced to pass on these increases to their customers, causing a decrease in business and causing the Ontario economy to suffer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to devise a fair and uncomplicated system of tax assessment."

I am pleased to join the members of the Ford City BIA in signing this petition.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition on behalf of my community of Hamilton-Wentworth.

"Whereas the Harris funding cutbacks are having a devastating impact on hospitals and patient care across Ontario, and have resulted in an anticipated \$38-million deficit at the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals; and

"Whereas the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals will receive \$4 million less in revenue from the Ministry of Health and other sources; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris funding cuts are causing a crisis in hospital care in Hamilton-Wentworth, with hospitals facing huge deficits, cuts to patient care and bed closings; and

"Whereas Scott Rowand, president of the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals, spoke out recently in the Hamilton Spectator saying, 'For the first time in my career, I don't know how to fix this problem other than an awful lot of closures of programs and services needed by the community'; and

"Whereas Mr Rowand went on to say: 'We need more cash in the system and we need it now. And that is cash to deal with the issues that we are dealing with today. Don't ask us to do anything more because the people in the system are at their limit.'

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Harris government stop underfunding Ontario's hospitals to fund tax cuts for the wealthy and act immediately to restore funding to the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals so they can continue providing quality health care services to the people of Hamilton-Wentworth."

I again support these petitioners in their demands.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): "Whereas the PC Party promised in the Common Sense Revolution to cut provincial income taxes by 30% in three years; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government lived up to that promise; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government did so six months ahead of schedule; and

"Whereas Ontario now has the lowest provincial tax rate in Canada; and

"Whereas 91% of all taxpayers now have seen an Ontario tax cut of 30% or greater; and

"Whereas this change will result in 655,000 low-income families and individuals paying no income tax at all; and

"Whereas Ontario's strong new economic climate has contributed to the private sector creating 375,000 net new jobs in Ontario since September 1995; and

"Whereas Ontario's outdated property tax system has been replaced by the Ontario fair assessment system; and

"Whereas the new system is fair, clear and more consistent; and

"Whereas low-income seniors and the disabled are protected from sudden tax increases; and

"Whereas changes to the Development Charges Act will make new homes affordable; and

"Whereas high-income earners now pay a fair share health care levy; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has introduced a rigorous new road safety program that includes some of the toughest measures to combat drunk or dangerous drivers; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has exceeded the spending floor on health care every year since being elected; and

"Whereas total health care spending for 1998-99 will be \$18.5 billion, the highest in Ontario's history; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has achieved this despite cuts in transfer payments by the federal Liberal government of more than \$2.4 billion; and

"Whereas a recent survey by the Fraser Institute proves that health care waiting lists in Ontario are the shortest anywhere in Canada; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is placing a greater emphasis on community-based health services in order to better care for an aging population; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is eliminating waste and duplication in the health care sector and reinvesting every penny into quality services; and

"Whereas this has resulted in reinvestments of over \$3 billion; and

"Whereas seniors will benefit from the government's \$1.2-billion investment to increase seniors' beds by 35%, including 2,200 new beds in Toronto alone;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to proceed with fulfilling the commitments made in the Common Sense Revolution and continuing to pursue policies which will make Ontario the best place to live, work, invest and raise a family."

I'm pleased to add my signature.

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HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas heritage is vitally important to the social and economic health of Ontario communities and Ontario residents; and

"Whereas community museums, galleries and heritage organizations work hard to protect, promote, manage and develop our provincial heritage resources; and

"Whereas the provincial government has a responsibility to the people of Ontario to promote the value of heritage and heritage conservation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has abdicated their responsibility for heritage by cutting support to community museums, galleries and heritage organizations; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has not implemented a new heritage act that would give communities the ability to better protect heritage sites; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has not undertaken meaningful consultation with Ontario's heritage community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide stronger support to Ontario's heritage institutions and organizations and to work with the people of Ontario to establish a new heritage act."

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I have a petition signed by over 530 people from the west end of Toronto and collected through the office of Councillor David Miller, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas we, the residents of the west end of the old city of Toronto, have suffered huge increases in our property taxes as a result of the provincial imposition of current value assessment; and

"Whereas these tax increases will force many residents to sell their homes and leave the city for other communities; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario has placed a cap on tax increases to small businesses, limiting them to no more than 2.5%; and

"Whereas a stable, prosperous residential population is essential for the continued survival of small business in our neighbourhood;

"Therefore now be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the government of the province of Ontario place a cap on all residential tax increases resulting from current value assessment in the city of Toronto of no more than 2.5%."

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT RESTRUCTURING

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I present petitions calling for the elimination of regional government in Haldimand-Norfolk. This is signed by residents of Dunnville, Canfield, York, Cayuga and other areas in the former county of Haldimand.

"Whereas the Haldimand-Norfolk region has down-loaded a 17% tax hike on residents, without attempting to cut its own costs; and

"Whereas for the past 25 years, there have been meetings, petitions, referenda, and studies calling for a restructuring of regional government; and

"Whereas 80% of the residents did not want regional government in the first place, and in recent referenda, 75% of the residents of the city of Nanticoke, and 60% of the residents of the town of Simcoe voted against retaining regional government; and

"Whereas residents in the region do not want and clearly cannot afford two levels of municipal government;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request that provincial legislation be passed to freeze taxes and eliminate regional government in Haldimand-Norfolk, and institute a form of restructured local government in keeping with the wishes and the financial means of the local residents."

I agree with this petition and hereby affix my signature to it.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): I have a petition here with respect to red light cameras making high-collision intersections safer.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas red light cameras can dramatically assist in reducing the number of injuries and deaths resulting from red light runners; and

"Whereas red light cameras only take pictures of licence plates, thus reducing privacy concerns; and

"Whereas all revenues from violations can easily be directed to a designated fund to improve safety at high-collision intersections; and

"Whereas there is a growing disregard for traffic laws, resulting in serious injury to pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and especially children and seniors; and

"Whereas the provincial government has endorsed the use of a similar camera system to collect tolls on the new Highway 407 tollway; and

"Whereas mayors and concerned citizens across Ontario have been seeking permission to deploy these cameras due to limited police resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario support the installation of red light cameras at high-collision intersections to monitor and prosecute motorists who run red lights."

I am pleased to affix my signature to this.

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have more petitions regarding the saving of Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital, forwarded to me by Marjorie Martin, president of OPSEU local 203. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned citizens of Hamilton and the surrounding communities, beg leave to petition the government of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission has announced the closure of Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Health Services Restructuring Commission, is divesting its responsibility for mental health care without hearing from the community first; and

"Whereas community-based mental health care providers will bear the brunt of this ill-fated decision by being forced to meet what is sure to be an increased demand for their services; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is not adequately monitoring community-based mental health services for their effectiveness, efficiency or whether they're even delivering the agreed-upon programs in the first place, according to the 1997 annual report of the Provincial Auditor; and

"Whereas the community pays the price for cuts to mental health care;

"We, the citizens of Hamilton and area who care about quality, accessible and publicly accountable mental health care for all Ontarians, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately set aside all recommendations to divest and/or close Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital and the programs and services it provides; and

"Further, to call for full hearings to seek community solutions to community issues and to democratically decide the future of mental health care for the citizens of Hamilton and area."

I support these petitioners by adding my name.

ADOPTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I have a petition to present on behalf of my constituents, specifically given to me by Rik Davies and his wife Linda, who live in Nestleton.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the Adoption Reform Coalition of Ontario, ARCO, brings together various organizations to recommend reform of Ontario adoption law based on honesty, openness and integrity;

"Whereas existing adoption secrecy legislation is outdated and unjust;

"Whereas Canada has ratified standards of civil and human rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; these rights are denied to persons affected by secrecy provisions in adoption laws and the Child and Family Services Act and other acts in Ontario;

"Whereas 20% of persons in Ontario are directly or indirectly affected by restricted rights to personal information available to other citizens;

"Whereas the adopted person's right to his or her birth identity is rooted in a basic and fundamental human need;

"Whereas most birth parents did not ask for lifelong confidentiality; it was imposed upon them involuntarily;

"Whereas research shows that not knowing basic personal information has proven harmful to adopted persons, birth parents, adoptive parents and other birth relatives;

"Whereas research in other countries has shown that unqualified access to information in adoption satisfies the overwhelming majority of the parties involved;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to enact revision of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts to:

"Permit unrestricted access to full personal identifying birth information to adopted persons and adult children of adopted persons and unrestricted access to the adopted person's amended birth certificate to birth parents, birth grandparents, siblings and other birth relatives when the adopted person reaches 18."

There's more to this, and I'm pleased to sign my name to this petition.

1510

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): I move that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing November 1, 1998, and ending April 30, 1999, such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation following the voting of supply.

Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Nepean, the member of Simcoe Centre, the member for Northumberland and the member for Durham East. I will be very brief because obviously we have some very capable speakers on the schedule for speaking this afternoon. I simply will say that this motion is always one

of the most important motions that we pass in this House. It is the motion that gives permission for the government to send money to the municipalities, the hospitals and the school boards around this province, and of course it's the motion that appropriates the payment of the salaries to the excellent and dedicated members of our civil service.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further debate?

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): As per the normal custom, I would ask for unanimous consent to split the time between the three parties.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to share the time? I hear a no.

Mr Baird: Let the record show the Liberal Party denied unanimous consent for us to share time equally between the three parties as a matter of fairness.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise and to speak on concurrence. Concurrence is a unique opportunity in the Legislature when members can stand in their places and speak to a broad range of economic issues and certainly ones that I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to.

Undoubtedly, the biggest economic challenge that voters in Nepean expected their member of the provincial Parliament to go to work for was job creation. When I went door to door in the 1995 general election, everywhere I went job creation was priority number one because Ontario used to be the economic engine of Canada. We used to be a magnet for jobs, for investment and for opportunity, but for a decade we became known as a mismanaged debtor, over-governed, over-regulated and overtaxed, 56 tax increases to be fair, and that job creation record simply went down the drain. There were far too many unemployed. There were far too many people looking for work. There were far too many people worried about whether the job they had they would be able to keep and whether or not their child would have a job when they graduated school, university or college or apprenticeship.

I'm pleased to report that there is now more hope and more prosperity in Ontario, and that is good news for people and particularly for young people. We've seen unemployment rates continue to fall, which is good news. We're committed to working harder to see the creation of even more jobs across Ontario to assist those people looking for work, but the recent news was very, very good. I was just reading a Toronto Sun article from a few short days ago, and it says, "It's Jobs, Jobs, Jobs in Ontario."

"Ontario led the nation in job creation last month accounting for 85% of the 73,000 new jobs across the nation."

Why are these jobs coming to Ontario? Why are they not going to the rest of the provinces? I think the economic policies of this government are having a very positive economic impact.

Interjection.

Mr Baird: The member opposite asked how many jobs were created in Ottawa-Carleton. I'd be very pleased to tell him about the jobs created in Ottawa-Carleton. The

member opposite talks about jobs outside of Toronto. "Area's Unemployment Rate Back on Track" from the *Ottawa Citizen*. "Ottawa-Hull's unemployment rate tumbled in September to 7.1% from 7.4% a month earlier," Statistics Canada said yesterday.

When you take the numbers from the city of Hull in la belle province out of the picture, it's even brighter; it's almost a point less, approximately 6.1%. Then when you look at the healthy high-tech growth going on in the west end and particularly in Nepean, Barrhaven, Stittsville and Kanata, the news is even brighter, probably even a point less than that.

The member opposite wants to talk about areas outside of Toronto and I would be very pleased to talk about that. We saw some very positive economic growth in Hamilton and in Halton, as well, and it is indeed very good news for the people of Ontario that jobs are being created there.

Ontario's unemployment rate dipped to 7.1%, the lowest in almost a decade. Can you imagine that? The lowest in almost a decade. Some 63,000 people found new jobs here in September, Statistics Canada reported yesterday — good news indeed.

"How come we've got 85% of all the jobs in Canada created here in Ontario?" the finance minister asks. I'll tell him: because we're balancing the budget, on track, as we promised to; because we're cutting provincial income taxes — we now have the lowest income tax rate in Canada; that's why — because we're cutting red tape; because we're assisting small business by cutting the corporate tax on small business by 50% over the next eight years; because we're cutting the commercial and industrial taxes over the next eight years — problems that were left for years by governments past. That is indeed very, very good news not just in Ottawa-Carleton, which has an unemployment rate of 6.1%, and perhaps even closer to 5% for Nepean.

We can talk about the other areas. Unemployment in Hamilton and Burlington is at its lowest level in more than a decade. The area's new jobless rate is 4.6%, the lowest in Canada. I know that's because of the hard-working efforts of the member for Wentworth North, Mr Skarica, in fighting for lower taxes, fighting for less government. It's because the member for Hamilton West, Lillian Ross, has been fighting for those types of policies; the member for Hamilton Mountain and the member for Wentworth East have been fighting for lower taxes because low taxes help create jobs. That's indeed good news.

The economic recovery is taking hold in the rest of the province and we've got to work harder to help the economy create jobs, because as long as there's one single person out looking for a job, we've got work to do. Our government is committed to those efforts.

That's the good news on the unemployment and employment situation.

I'd like to talk about some other issues. Undoubtedly, assisting job creation is keeping a low tax environment and the worst job killer is payroll taxes. That's why we on this side of the House are so very concerned about the employment insurance scam being perpetrated at the fed-

eral level. I know you'll be interested in this part of my remarks.

I was reading a very good editorial in the *Financial Post* by Diane Francis entitled, "Skimming the EI Surplus in Order to Spend it is Outrageous." I want to tell you I completely concur. I'm getting calls from constituents in Nepean saying the provincial government should be speaking out about this pickpocketing of Ontario workers, and you bet your boots I'm going to be here to raise those concerns in the provincial Parliament about those Liberal government tax raiders.

I'm going to read Diane Francis for a minute. This is a good one. "The Grits should keep their mitts off the potential \$6-billion employment insurance surplus and lower premiums paid by workers and employers immediately." I agree with Diane Francis.

We had a very unique opportunity last week in this Legislature. The Premier of Ontario stood up to fight for Ontario workers and small business people and said, "Surely we can all agree in this Parliament to ask the federal government not to raid the EI surplus plan."

We came to this House and the Premier gave remarks and the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the third party got up to speak. I'm going to tell you, I want to give some credit where credit is due. The member for Rainy River, the leader of the NDP, stood up and forcefully fought for Ontario workers and said that he was prepared to stand up for Ontario.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Did you agree to increase CPP premiums, John?

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Baird: I know the Liberal member opposite doesn't want to hear about this but it's important to my constituents.

In this House we had a rare opportunity. The Leader of the Opposition had five minutes to stand up and speak up for Ontario workers, to speak up for those hard-working people who have paid too much for too long, and for small business people.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): He said nothing.

Mr Baird: "He said nothing," the member for High Park-Swansea says. You betcha. He gave the pass and said he would not use his time to speak and asked the finance critic, who is an otherwise good fellow, to give the Liberal Party's position. I listened very closely. He didn't say one single thing about the employment insurance issue, not one.

1520

But I'll tell you, it got very, very hot outside in front of the television cameras when the Leader of the Opposition, Mr McGuinty, got out there. He was asked, "Why weren't you standing up for Ontario workers?" and the sweat was just pouring off him. He said: "I had my finance critic do it. He's more well versed in these issues."

Then one of the reporters said: "But, Mr McGuinty, he didn't mention employment insurance. He didn't mention the pickpocketing of Ontario workers. He didn't speak up for Ontario workers. Why didn't you get up in your place?"

Are you here to apologize for Allan Rock and the federal Liberals or are you here to fight for Ontario workers?" This unanimity is not present in Ontario.

Interjection: The umbilical cord reaches from Ottawa.

Mr Baird: The umbilical cord reaches from Ottawa is a good point. But it did happen in Ottawa where we saw the leader joining Mike Harris and Howard Hampton in their opposition to this EI surplus rate. I'm going to tell the member what they said. "Why should waitresses and factory workers pay hundreds of dollars more in EI premiums just to satisfy Martin's insatiable appetite for payroll revenue?" asked Reform Party leader Preston Manning.

Was this just a plot from the right? No. New Democratic Party leader Alexa McDonough called Martin's scheme to squander the surplus legal larceny. I want to tell you, I agree with Alexa McDonough on this issue. It is legal larceny. Mr Martin should give the money back to Ontario workers. That factory worker, that waitress, that small business person who has been paying into this fund should get the money back.

We may disagree on how that money should be spent. We think it should go right back to those hard-working people; some of our colleagues in the New Democratic Party believe it should go into training. But we share the view that it should not be squandered in new spending and be put into the consolidated revenue fund of the federal government. That is something that is extremely important. It should be returned to the Ontario worker and small business person. That is something that is very, very important.

As well, I'm pleased to have this opportunity to talk about deficit reduction and our commitment. We made a commitment in the last election to balance the budget in five years. That was, indeed, a good commitment to make. Every single quarter —

Mr Michael Brown: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. We should have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Clerk, could you check and see if there's a quorum, please.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: The member for Algoma-Manitoulin is the only opposition member of the Legislature sitting in the opposition benches, and that should be known. While we're trying to create jobs and balance the budget —

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat for a moment. You should know the rules. You're not supposed to comment on members not in the House. Thank you.

Mr Baird: I withdraw the remark that there was only one opposition member and I apologize.

The Acting Speaker: I just ask you to withdraw it, not repeat what you said before. Just withdraw, please.

Mr Baird: Withdraw.

I was talking about the deficit. The deficit of course is a big concern to people in Ontario. Constituents in Nepean tell me to ensure that the government balances the budget

as it promised in five years. The good news is, when we took over, it was over \$11 billion, and every single quarter, the government has made its deficit reduction target. That is something that is exceptionally important. The deficit for the last year, ending on March 30, was less than \$4 billion, down \$2.6 billion from our balanced budget plan. It is indeed very good news that we are ahead of the deficit reduction target.

I want to get on the record that revenue last year was \$378 million more than the interim estimate because we were extremely cautious. There is more tax revenue coming into the government after the tax cuts, because you cut taxes and you bring in more money because there are more taxpayers, more people paying sales tax, more people paying income tax, more businesses paying corporate taxes. That's indeed very good news.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Just like the cigarette tax with the feds.

Mr Baird: Just like the cigarette tax, the member for Ottawa-Rideau says.

The 1998-99 budget plan is based on extremely cautious and prudent formulas and I know we're going to make our deficit reduction target once again, as we always have. That is indeed good news.

The five-year balanced budget plan I think is realistic and obtainable and we will meet or exceed it.

We've seen some positive economic growth. We've seen some positive numbers. We've seen deficit reduction. We've seen some significant welfare reforms which have been in large measure part of the deficit reduction plan to get more people off welfare and into the workforce, which is good news.

We've seen a lot of new jobs in Nepean. I visited Industry 1047. They've hired a few new people at their light manufacturing firm, and that's good news.

RONA Warehouse: more than 200 new jobs.

New home sales are up for residential construction again this year in Longfields and Davidson Heights, in Stittsville and Kanata and Barrhaven. That's good news for folks there.

We've seen two new high schools to be built in my community of Nepean and Barrhaven, and that's good news. We've seen an announcement of a new high school to be built in Stittsville, and there will be more jobs.

Westeinde Construction just built a new furniture store on Hunt Club Road and we've seen a gigantic expansion of JDS Fitel and the flourishing high-tech industries of Ottawa-Carleton, and indeed that is good news.

At the same time as balancing the budget and cutting taxes, my constituents are telling me that health care is a priority. I've listened to their concerns and brought them forward to my colleagues here. A lot of folks are concerned about the pace of change and want to ensure that we take the time to get it right. I'm sure they have a good friend in our health minister, Elizabeth Witmer.

Just in Nepean alone we've increased the Starwood Extendicare long-term-care facility budget by more than \$400,000 annually as part of \$4 million in new spending in long-term care in Ottawa-Carleton. We're helping to

construct the Villa Marconi long-term-care facility to serve our older Italian community, and that is good news for long-term care in Ottawa-Carleton.

People have talked to me about the concerns about overcrowding at the Queensway-Carleton Hospital. We're investing more than \$28 million in the expansion of the Queensway-Carleton Hospital. They're one of the most efficient hospitals in Ontario, and that is good news for the west end.

We've seen physician payments go up by more than \$20 million in Ottawa-Carleton because more people are visiting physicians and the government is there to meet those obligations.

More funding for the drug plan. We've increased the CCAC — the community care access budget — by more than \$3 million and announced plans to refurbish some of the older long-term-care facilities such as the Hillel Lodge serving the Jewish community, and they'll do a fantastic job on the new Jewish community centre campus in the west end of the city of Ottawa. That will be of great benefit to folks from right across the region.

This is some good economic news. Since the 1995 throne speech we've seen private sector employment increase by more than 366,000 positions, and that accounts for 48.5% of all the jobs created in Canada. That is good news.

We've seen the number of people depending on welfare decline by nearly 20,000 in September, a drop of 2.7% from August 1998. Over 323,000 people have stopped relying on welfare since this House first met in September 1995.

Think of a city the size of Ottawa of people off welfare. They got the call. The voice on the other end of the phone said, "You got the job," and they're able to provide for their own family. That is positive economic news about the increasingly rosy outlook in the province of Ontario.

1530

In September, the Ontario help wanted index rose by 0.7%, reaching its highest level since the NDP came into power. Over the first eight months of 1998, commercial-industrial building permits rose by 33% from a year ago. This followed a 32.6% rise for 1997. Indeed, in Nepean those types of permits are up by more than 300%, because we're seeing such positive economic growth, and that is indeed good news.

In Ottawa-Carleton, the Conference Board of Canada has said that our area's output is forecast to grow by 3.9% in 1998, and Ottawa's economy is becoming more diversified and benefiting from a growing high-tech sector.

Mr Michael Brown: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I think the member is chasing people out of here. There's no quorum present, I believe.

The Acting Speaker: Clerk, could you check and see if there is a quorum, please.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: I will resist the urge —

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): — to name the one member in the opposition party who called quorum.

Mr Baird: The members are talking about the one member in the opposition, who called quorum.

The economic picture is brighter in Ontario. We're on track to balance the budget. The jobs are coming, and we're rededicating ourselves to work harder to create more jobs, 63,000 last month alone, the member for Scarborough East said, and that is indeed good news. We will balance the budget on target within five years, as we committed to do, at the same time increasing spending on health care and protecting classroom education.

I'm pleased to have had this opportunity to speak on this very important motion and would now like to invite the member for Simcoe Centre to make some remarks.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I am very pleased to join my colleagues and take part in the debate on this interim supply motion. As you know, the government has been authorized to make payments prior to October 31, and this motion is about getting authority to make payments after October 31, 1998. It's going to cover a six-month period, from November 1, 1998, to April 30, 1999. Without spending authority, most scheduled and unscheduled payments, including payments to nursing homes, hospitals, doctors, municipalities, general welfare recipients, children's aid societies and suppliers' accounts, cannot be paid. So it's fundamental that the authority is given to the government to have this motion passed, to ensure that it meets its responsibilities. We're certainly looking for all the other parties to join with us in the passage of this interim supply motion.

In line with this, I'd like to speak about how the Ontario economy has been doing so well, notwithstanding the measures that have been taken by the federal government to put barriers in the way of growth in the GDP. As the member for Nepean commented, the Ontario economy is producing positive GDP growth, notwithstanding what has been happening with the federal Liberals.

That growth is very evident in my riding of Simcoe Centre. In the household-sector areas, with respect to department stores, the growth has been very encouraging. We've had a new Bay, a new Sears, and in fact a new Chapters is entering the area. Also, there are housing starts, and growth in the housing sector has been very significant over the last two years and has led to tremendous economic development within Simcoe Centre as well as Simcoe county.

Also, the positive results with respect to the automotive sector have boded well for Simcoe Centre and Simcoe county, because one in every six jobs is dependent on the automotive sector. In Simcoe Centre we're very fortunate to have the Automotive Institute at Georgian College, which was a recent recipient of \$4.8 million towards its new programs with respect to automotive design and tool and die making, which will produce graduates and actually increase space for students to enrol in these particular programs, which will lead to jobs in the automotive sector.

The automotive sector is very important to Simcoe county because of the Honda plant, which just recently expanded by 1,200 additional jobs. Also, in Simcoe county we have in excess of 20 automotive parts suppliers and growing. It's our objective to solidify that automotive sector, because it results in growth not only for the economy but also in very good-paying jobs.

We're very pleased with the results that have been achieved. In September, Ontario gained 62,100 net new jobs, and that represents 85.3% of all the jobs created in Canada. That's just an astounding figure, showing that Ontario is back to being the engine of the Canadian economy. Private sector employment was up 64,000 in September, while public sector employment was down 2,000. The Ontario unemployment rate fell to 7.1% from 7.2% in August of this year. Youth employment rose for the third straight month, up 26,500 in September, while the youth jobless rate remained steady at 14%.

The total job numbers in the public and private sectors since the throne speech in September 1995: There have been 400,008 net new jobs created in Ontario, and this represents 48.6% of all the jobs created in Canada during that period.

Certainly the economic climate that has been put in place by this government bodes well for the current economy and also for the future economic growth of this province, notwithstanding the lack of initiatives and the barriers that have been put in place by the federal government. I just want to comment on one of those, because of the youth unemployment concerns we have across this country, not just regionally, with respect to the plans by the federal government to take \$20 billion, the surplus in the employment insurance fund, and use it for other purposes. I certainly hope the reports that have been put forth by the media are wrong with respect to the federal government's intentions.

I'd like to note that Ontario workers and businesses contributed two thirds of the \$20-billion surplus and I believe should receive a premium reduction. I believe the EI fund should be administered at arm's length from the federal government, similar to the Canada pension plan, and the premiums used for EI purposes only. For example, if EI premiums were eliminated for young Canadians, more than 200,000 jobs could be created. That's something that has been put forth by the Minister of Finance to Paul Martin, the Minister of Finance at the federal level, on more than one occasion, unfortunately to deaf ears. I really wonder where their priorities are with respect to the youth of this country, in terms of getting them into the workplace. It shouldn't be created by phony job creation schemes. It basically should be created by the private sector, good-paying jobs created by the private sector.

I also believe that any excess EI money should be returned to the workers and the businesses who created the surplus in the first place, not go into the pockets of the federal government. One of the misnomers here is that the federal government is talking in circles with respect to how this money was created and who has ownership of it. The bottom line is that this is taxpayers' money and it

should be returned to them. The federal government only got it into its coffers through the backs of the workers. I believe they should be returning that money. It's not their money to fool around with with respect to general revenues. The legitimate question is: How did the federal government come up with a supposed surplus last year? If you really look at the books, perhaps the surplus was really the EI surplus taken into general revenues to create what is a phony surplus on the federal government's behalf.

1540

I hope the media reports are wrong and that the federal government does not confiscate the EI surplus for its own spending schemes. That's really what we're talking about here: what they believe is their priority in terms of dealing with this surplus.

The federal initiatives have essentially made a lot of Ontarians worse off. You have to wonder, why would the federal government be taking these measures to try to negatively affect the Ontario economy, try to make this province not as beneficial as it should be? You have to wonder why these measures would be taken. The Liberal government has 101 MPs elected from this province to Ottawa. They weren't elected to undermine the Ontario economy and they weren't elected to do anything but represent Ontario's interests, and they're doing anything but that. They seem to think their mandate is to get this provincial government defeated so they can bring in some basic parasite government for Ontario that will do anything they wish in the provincial sphere. That's not in the best interests of the province. We need someone to check the federal government, to make sure it adequately represents the interests of this province and doesn't just do anything the federal government wants.

One of the big ironies I was reading the other day in the Star was Allan Rock coming out with a comment with respect to the health situation in this country, saying that it's not at serious levels: "We can work together. There are some problems we have to address, but by the way, the federal government doesn't have any money to make sure the redress is going to be put in place," even though they've cut social spending and health care spending across the country by \$7 billion, and in particular by \$2.2 billion in spending on health care and social services from this province.

Who is that Minister of Health to be able to dictate how we're going to provide health care at the same time they give eight cents on the dollar towards health care in this province? They have no new ideas with respect to how to resolve the concerns that they have in their own mind. The provincial government is doing what it can to make sure that we have the best health care system we possibly can have. I'm very fortunate, being the member for Simcoe Centre, in that we have a brand-new hospital, the Royal Victoria Hospital, in our riding that is providing excellent service not only to the city of Barrie but throughout the region.

I find it almost ironic that the federal government would be saying at the same time: "We have to impose some standards but we're not going to give you any

money. We basically just want to be the federal watchdog over a system that we think is dear to the hearts of Canadians." They're right about one thing. Health care is dear to the hearts of all Canadians, but the federal government basically has abdicated its role, not only with respect to health care, not only with respect to social programs, but also being a leader with respect to job creation in this country.

What have they done to make life worse for consumers? They are basically looking at not reducing EI premiums, by putting it into their general revenues. They're looking at increasing CPP premiums by a significant percentage, I believe 10%, which is strictly a payroll tax which comes out of your pocket and my pocket, and heaven knows whether the CPP program is going to be around when we're ready to retire.

They have control over gas price spending. What are they doing? They are doing nothing about it. They know there's price-fixing. They know the prices are too high. They know that in my riding and in other ridings basically gas prices go up five to eight cents per litre every weekend because of the volume of traffic. What are they doing to help consumers? Nothing. Also, what are they doing about income taxes? They're making a lot of noises that we deserve an income tax cut. Obviously we do; we're the highest-taxed jurisdiction in North America at the federal level. They're not doing anything to make sure that we're fairly taxed. Also, what are they doing? They're saying all the economic indicators are in order, that everything is sound. Why is our dollar standing at 64 cents if everything is sound and the federal government's fiscal performance is an indication of why we're doing so well?

The bottom line is that the federal government's fiscal performance with respect to investors and how they view this country is abysmal. That's why the dollar is at 64 cents and dropping, because they haven't taken measures with respect to addressing our debt, they haven't taken measures to address their oversized government and their spending, and they haven't taken measures to deal with the income tax at the personal level because it's far too high. They haven't done anything other than find ways to get more money out of consumers' pockets through EI premiums, through CPP premiums and through gas prices that they have control to change. They're not the friends of the little guy. That's the phoniest statement I've ever heard from the federal government. They're not here to serve the best interests of the average Canadian. All they are is smoke and mirrors, and they try to make us feel good.

The bottom line is that the provincial government has performed very well with respect to the economic climate that is produced in this province. They have done that notwithstanding the barriers that have been put in place by the federal government in terms of dealing with our economic growth. That also applies to their do-nothing attitude with respect to the health care sector. All they do is say that we need to have a single tier of health care. At the same time, they're creating by their own actions the weakening of the health care system in this province, and they rely on their provincial Liberal counterparts to be puppets

of their message and basically say: "Why aren't you doing this? Why aren't you doing this about gas prices?" It has got to be the height of hypocrisy to speak in this House and say, "How come you're not doing anything about gas prices?" when you know there was a 40-page report prepared by the MP in Durham, Dan McTeague, about gas prices. The federal government has control over gas prices. They have control over the Competition Act with respect to dealing with that.

What really irks me, besides all their measures to take money out of the consumers and the rhetoric they put forth with respect to health care and our economy, is dealing with the infrastructure in terms of railway. In my own riding we're dealing with a situation in which CN has been given the power under federal legislation in 1996 to rip up tracks throughout the province as long as they go through a procedure of offering it through the federal government, the provincial governments, the municipal governments and the private sector. What we're facing is a situation where we're going to lose the track from Barrie to Bradford unless measures are taken to make sure that CN doesn't tear up those tracks, and I'm very pleased to say that the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission has expressed some interest in acquiring that line and is going to be talking to CN about this.

This measure wouldn't have had to be taken with respect to our critical infrastructure if the federal government had put into place something with respect to a railway policy. They're responsible for railways, yet at the same time, when they get rid of railway through their federal legislation, they say to the province: "No, it's your responsibility. We got rid of railway and we allowed the CN to get out of it, but since we have done that, it's now a provincial responsibility." That's another way of certainly passing the buck.

The bottom line is that I have been working as the MPP for Simcoe Centre to make sure we don't lose that critical infrastructure. The experience in the United States, where CN is now investing heavily because they were made a crown corporation by the federal government, is that the public sector in the United States is investing heavily in rail infrastructure. They see that's the way to go with respect to the environment, passenger travel and also freight. That's where they're going in the industrial corridor in the United States. We're going in the opposite direction because of the federal government. They're basically saying, "Let's get out of the rail business," and they're stripping Ontario of its vital rail. That's something we have to fight against because they are giving up their responsibility. They put nothing in place to protect our infrastructure and at the same time they say it's a provincial responsibility. That's the way the federal government works. They don't want any responsibility, yet they want to be the arbiter of all that's good and right in this country to keep it together.

1550

The bottom line is that I'm very pleased to see that measures are being taken by the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission to show some interest in preserving

that Barrie-to-Bradford rail line, because I really believe that once we maintain that hardware, we should be looking into that area at GO Transit. I've worked very hard as an MPP to make sure that happens.

I'm in support of this motion on interim supply. I would just like to say that I will be passing my time over to the member for Northumberland. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Essex South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations concerning gasoline prices. This matter will be debated at 6 pm today.

Further debate.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I would like to open my remarks with a quote from Peter Drucker: "Plans are only good intentions unless they immediately generate into hard work."

Our party, a good year before the previous election, set out our plans in the Common Sense Revolution. They were well defined. It was our platform; it was our commitment to the people of Ontario. Right after June 8, 1995, we went to work and worked very, very hard. The success of our government relates to the hard work of the PC Party of Ontario. We're doing what we said we would do and the people of Ontario know it and are recognizing us for that very thing.

As a result of this, our economy has improved significantly. Our job creation is up significantly. The welfare numbers are down. Our health care spending is up, in spite of the federal government cutting us by almost \$3 billion, thanks to the first cousins of the Liberals here in our House. Our priority spending is very specific in education and our total spending on education is also up.

I would like to spend just a few minutes talking about our economy. One of the planks in our platform that we took very seriously was to get spending under control. By getting spending under control, it would give confidence — and it has given confidence — to business, to investors and also to consumers.

We came into office finding there were two sets of books and we pulled those two sets together. I couldn't believe they would be operating under two sets of books but that's what we found. We found that instead of a deficit of \$8 billion, it was \$11.3 billion. They were planning on spending more than they would be taking in in the year 1995-96. We were committed to balancing that budget within five years; in other words, by 2000-01.

This was well in excess of \$1 million an hour that was being spent that wasn't being taken in. The interest we were paying out was approximately \$8 billion or, in other words, just about the \$1 million an hour that was disappearing into nowhere because of this debt that had been created over the years.

Last year, I'm pleased to be able to report, the deficit was down to \$4 billion. That's \$2.6 billion ahead of the original plan and \$1.2 billion ahead of what we had actually budgeted for. In our commitment we had provided for tax cuts — that is, provincial income tax — by some 30%,

but also provided for the cutting of payroll taxes, such as the employer health tax up to a payroll of \$400,000 for any one business, and also the cutting of corporate taxes. That will be going on for several more years.

In spite of this tax reduction, revenues increased last year by \$4.1 billion more than was projected, to approximately \$52.2 billion. It's very obvious that we in Ontario are indeed on the right track. In 1997 alone, not too far down the road after we took over, residential construction was up 19.1%, purchases of machinery and equipment were up some 18.7%, and our exports abroad some 10.3%. I can assure you that those trends are continuing well into 1998 and many economists, if not all economists, are projecting those kinds of trends well into 1999.

Just to look at my own riding for a minute with the economy and maybe just to pick one sector such as tourism, expansions are happening all over. For example, a resort on Rice Lake, Golden Beach Resort, has gone through a significant expansion and in any given day on a summer weekend there are between 2,000 and 3,000 people at that resort. Dear knows how many will be there in the future with this expansion.

Another area of expansion is the St Anne's Country Inn and Spa in Haldimand township, just north of Grafton. They're running at 90% occupancy, which is almost unheard of for that kind of an operation. They're also going through a significant expansion of their water plan.

Last weekend, to stimulate tourism, the community of Port Hope had a heritage festival and it was very successful. The Ontario government assisted them with some \$12,500 to work with Market Ontario partnerships. This kind of partnership helps the ripple effect. When tourism activities occur, it isn't just that spot where the tourism is going on; there is a ripple effect to gas stations, to hotels, to bed-and-breakfasts, to shopping malls and other retail outlets in the general area. To give you some example, in April and June, US visitors into Canada spent \$2.2 billion on tourism specifically. Just imagine what they spent on flights and on food and accommodation prior to reaching their tourist destination.

There's been a lot of excitement in the last day or so about jobs, and rightly so. In September we had a net increase of 62,100 jobs. If you break that down, in the private sector there was the creation of some 64,000 jobs and in the public sector a loss of approximately 2,000, with that net increase of 62,100. Across Canada there were some 73,000. The end result, if you calculate that out, is that approximately 85% of the new jobs created in Canada in the month of September were right here in Ontario, which took our unemployment rate down from 7.2% to 7.1%. We now have a gain in the province since June 1995, in other words, the election date, of some 403,000 net new jobs, some 326,000 of those just in the last 19 months.

In Northumberland the statistics are similarly encouraging. In unemployment we're now below the national average. Some 26% of the local employers plan in the immediate future to add more workers, and only some 6% have any intention of reducing their workforce.

It's also rather exciting as we look at the change in welfare. No time in the history of Ontario did welfare expand more than in the good times of the late 1980s, when the good Liberals were in government. That's when the welfare rolls just took right off. It was a little more understandable in the early 1990s, when we were into recessionary times — recessionary times of course created by the NDP. Nevertheless, the welfare rolls continued to accumulate at that point in time. Last month, approximately 20,000 people left that vicious circle of welfare. That's some 323,000 people since June 1995. That's the good news. The bad news is that there are still 692,835 left on welfare. But the fact is that a third of the people who were on welfare when we took office are now off welfare, and that indeed is good news.

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In Northumberland, since we took office, 922 have been able to get off welfare. That would be equal to some 20 busloads, or maybe three times the filling of Victoria Hall in Cobourg. Alone in Northumberland, 557 back in 1997 found jobs after they had been on the program of work for welfare. Across the province, it's my understanding that some 427,500 people have participated in the mandatory workfare program.

How to get a job? One of the big answers is getting experience, and that's really what Ontario Works is about, giving experience to people who have been on welfare for an extended period of time. Without that experience a job is really only a dream. Our government, to assist with this program and help people, has increased the child care from some \$30 million to \$40 million to assist those Ontario Works participants. We've also put some \$25 million into the learning, earning and parenting program to help with child care subsidy and other supports for single parents.

A lot of people ask me why our approach is working. It's not traditional. No one really agreed, or very few agreed, that cutting taxes and at the same time cutting the deficit was going to work. But, lo and behold, when you cut taxes more money is put into the economy, the economy is stimulated, and when the economy is stimulated, jobs appear. With tax cuts, the money is left in people's pockets and they do spend.

Many economists agree with what we're doing, agreed ahead of time, and they talked a lot about the Laffer curve. We were to the point with taxes in Ontario where the previous two governments over 10 years increased taxes over 60 times. As a result of keeping increasing them it got to the point in this economists' Laffer curve where as you increased taxes the actual revenue reduced. This government has come in with far more than 60 tax cuts, and as we cut taxes, giving some stimulus to the economy, the end result has been a very significant increase in the revenues coming into the coffers at this time.

As we have been doing a lot to stimulate the economy in Ontario — and I'd suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that if it hadn't been for this government and the province of Ontario, the federal government would never have balanced their budget. They're extremely fortunate with

the economic program that we have in this province, and they're riding on what we were doing to stimulate the economy. They didn't cut taxes. Just imagine what could have happened in Ontario and across Canada if the federal government had taken notice and implemented similar programs. We could have stimulated the economy across Canada, it wouldn't have been just Ontario. But we see provinces like BC and Saskatchewan just disappearing quickly as their taxes keep going up, both provincially and federally.

We're about to balance our budget in Ontario, but it's interesting to note what the feds are doing by cutting the transfer payments to our province and all across Canada, but particularly in our province, by some \$3 billion. At the same time they've accumulated employment insurance premiums for some reason, and no one seems to really know why. By accumulating those and overtaxing on employment insurance, it's a payroll tax that's cutting jobs. It's cutting jobs in Ontario and it's cutting jobs right across Canada. They could do something about it and they should be doing something about it.

The member for Mississauga North has put forth a motion for interim supply to get on with the paying of our bills which I enthusiastically support. It will be bills mostly for transfer payments to our hospitals and for health care, to look after our sick, look after our frail and elderly, and to support a lot of the new technology that's coming into the field of medicine today. It'll be paying for education, particularly to the public school boards, to look after our little people, our universities and our colleges, to help with our highly trained workforce, and also going to our municipalities to assist them with their various activities, including their infrastructure. It will also help the operation of the province of Ontario, and our operation has been cut by more than a third. We are leading by example. We're not asking other people to do something that we're not doing ourselves.

For these reasons, I'm extremely pleased to support this motion put forth by the member for Mississauga North.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): Madam Speaker, I was becoming a little alarmed that the member for Northumberland was making some extremely valid points. I want to avoid if possible any form of duplication and waste, which is one of the bylines of this government. I have extremely good news from my riding of Durham. That's the new name of my riding in the next election. It's Durham, which is in Durham region of course, representing some five or six different municipalities.

I have to take a broader look at the debate today. I want to correct the record that the interim supply bill that we're debating today is really from the member for Mississauga South, the Honourable Margaret Marland, who is the minister in charge of children's issues. I have a lot of respect for the member for Mississauga South. For the record, that's her riding. She's certainly doing a formidable job, as are many of the ministers in this government: a small cabinet, but a very effective cabinet under the very direct leadership and decisive leadership of our Premier, Mike Harris.

But I want to look to others for what they're saying about the economy of this province and about the optimism and the hope and opportunity in jobs and all the other — look to what the third party people are saying. I'm going to take a rather random survey here, Madam Speaker, with your indulgence.

David Lindsay of course is a former secretary to the Premier, now in charge of the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board at arm's length from the government and leading a consultation across this province with the leaders who create the jobs. Government is the partner. Recently there was a comment made by people on the panel, leaders in our great province.

Joshua Mendelsohn, CIBC chief economist, said, "Canada has been affected by falling commodity prices, a weak currency that required a boost in interest rates and by volatile global financial markets." He also added, "In the wake of these forces, the Canadian economy, Ontario is poised to do very well." In fact, CIBC senior economist Linda Nazareth said, "During the next year, Ontario is likely to lead the provinces with strong exports to the United States, coupled with strong domestic activity."

I know in the Ottawa Citizen this weekend I was impressed by an article, the breadth of the article. Our Minister of Finance, the Honourable Ernie Eves, was widely quoted as showing a balanced and optimistic view. I think the leaders of all parties here should be optimistic and yet deal with the realities that are going on in the province.

Where does this all start? I think you have to look beyond the province's role and look at the role of the federal government. Unfortunately, I'm a little uneasy about the role of the federal government. It came out very clearly, and I think the member for Nepean made the point very well earlier in the comments, when the Premier last week challenged Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien as to the ultimate use of the EI fund.

I think if you look at the debates and the scrums afterwards with the Leader of the Opposition — just a minute, don't tell me, what's his name? — Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the opposition party, when pressed, was not able to get out from under the shadow of his federal cousins. He clearly said that on the record. He wasn't able and he left it to his very capable finance critic, Mr Phillips. I have a lot of respect for him. In fact, I think his choice was right there, to let Mr Phillips comment, because clearly he's far more informed. I think that's what the leader said at the time, that he has others.

But just for the record here, the EI surplus belongs to the workers of Ontario, the hard-working people of Ontario. Clearly that's our job, to recognize that that money came from their paycheques and it should go back to their paycheques. Those are the people who paid it. I want to appeal to the opposition Liberal Party here today to rethink their decision to deny unanimous consent and bring it back to the House. I'm sure our Premier is willing. If we can go with a united voice, we can get the attention of their Liberal cousins in Ottawa.

I'm going to give you some numbers here. Ontario workers contributed in 1997 about \$8 billion in EI insurance premiums and received less than \$3.5 million in benefits. Clearly we want to be benevolent with all our partners, all other provinces. Certainly Ontario wants to lead the way and pay its fair share, but there's a fair share and then there's being abused. That's about \$4.5 billion taken out of the Ontario economy last year alone, almost \$5 billion taken out of the Ontario economy from our working people.

We're creating almost 360,000 net new jobs in the private sector, with partnerships in the private sector, and I look on the other side of the ledger and what's happening? EI premiums are overextended, CPP has been upped, and when I look at the taxes in this province from the federal government, if it wasn't for our 30% tax cut — and where is all this additional tax load coming from? What's the federal Liberal policy? Tax and spend. Clearly, don't let the voters of Ontario forget this. Our Premier and our Minister of Finance — reduce the premiums, Harris is suggesting. One of the suggestions he made — I'm going to refer to this as having a tax holiday for youth and youth unemployment, and clearly that's a goal of this government.

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There are a couple of other issues that I want to share in the few minutes I have left. I just want to randomly go through — there are about seven newspapers that service my riding and they carry my weekly column. There are a lot of columns in here that I am just going to quickly refer to: "Grade 6 Testing," "School Days Lost." There's a nice one here: "Bowmanville, Young Person with Long-range Plan as Future School Trustee. Fifteen-year-old Adrienne Silnicki of St Stephen's high school in Bowmanville is ready to take her position on the Catholic school board in the year 2000-01 as one of the elected school trustees." That was one of the entitlements under Bill 160, to involve all the citizens, including the students. It's a very important opportunity for their contribution.

Also, another interesting article from the Orono Weekly Times: "Textbook Deliveries in School Almost Complete." Jan Pomeroy, principal of the program for Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board: "Although they have arrived late, they are expected from the publisher. They are to enhance instructional programs for the school board." An allocation of over \$2 million to this board.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Take your seat, please. Questions and comments?

Mr Michael Brown: I am really pleased to have at least two minutes to be in the supply debate because the supply debate is one of the most important of our parliamentary traditions. Unfortunately, I am not able to report great news from the constituency of Algoma-Manitoulin. Our unemployment rate, unfortunately, is in double digits and increasing. We have problems with our physicians in terms of numbers. In my own constituency we've had calls from people in Espanola who tell us they are unable to contact a family physician. We've contacted the Minister

of Health about this and we have found that they have not been able to attract one, and the government's efforts are woefully inadequate in terms of providing physician services to Espanola.

We also have a problem in Elliot Lake in that for many months now, Sister Sarah at the hospital, the francophone community and I and many others have been attempting to secure a francophone physician for the people in Elliot Lake, one who is much needed, and to date we have not received the necessary approval in Elliot Lake so that we can have a francophone physician for a very significant and important part of the North Shore communities.

We also have, and I think you would find this interesting, property taxes across the area — I was talking with NOTOA, the Northern Ontario Tourist Outfitters Association, who are extremely upset with what's happening to the tourist component on the lakes and through all of northern Ontario to these resort businesses. I don't think some of them will be able to survive the property tax hits that are now happening to their businesses. That means loss of employment, revenue, you name it, to those folks.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): The flexibility that supply affords members is that they can talk about anything, and the government sure does. You've heard them: one speaker after the other telling the people of Ontario how good things are, and yet, the day after Thanksgiving, not a word about homelessness. Not everyone has a lot to be thankful for; a lot of people cannot look to the future with confidence.

This government takes credit for job creation, and when there are job losses — I was listening to the radio this morning and I just happened to catch some news from Merrill Lynch. You know Merrill Lynch. They bought Midland Walwyn. They're the largest brokerage house. They will be firing people by the thousands. Does it mean that the government will take credit for the pink slips when you see those 20-some making a million-some out the door?

It tells you that the climate for prosperity is not doing so well. We're resource-based. You know that if it's in the ground it's down in terms of market conditions. You have looked at the plight of our Canadian dollar, tied to the US, and we are the subject of international disfavour. Market conditions have revealed that our situation has been most unpleasant, especially in the month of August. It has been very painful for some.

Confidence will be restored, but it's going to take time, and yet this government, at every opportunity, spends and spends again. They'll have me in the poorhouse within the generation.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): It's always an interesting experience to listen to the member for Lake Nipigon. I suppose the irony when he talks about the stock market is that if he really truly followed it, he'd know that in the past week or so gold is up, and we know that's one of the prime resources of northern Ontario. I look forward to the gold mines rehiring many of their people over the next few months.

I want to comment on the comments of my colleagues from Simcoe Centre and Northumberland particularly when they talked about Liberal fiscal performance. I thought that was an oxymoron, because Liberal fiscal performance is exactly an oxymoron. The member for Northumberland said it so succinctly and so clearly, that if it wasn't for Ontario the federal government would not have been able to float and gloat in the surplus they are achieving. They achieve these surpluses on the backs of Ontario taxpayers, and what do we get in return? We don't get one red penny — pardon the pun — of gas taxes back for that wonderful element called the TransCanada Highway, not a nickel of federal money for the TransCanada Highway through northern Ontario.

Mr Baird: They're abandoning northern Ontario.

Mr Spina: Absolutely. The Liberals have abandoned northern Ontario. This government has invested more money in northern highways than there has been in the history of the province.

I repeat again, Liberal fiscal responsibility is an oxymoron.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I heard somebody make reference somewhere along the line to gasoline prices. Perhaps it was even an interjection. But I notice that despite all of the huffing and puffing by members of the Conservative government, nobody did anything about gas prices going up. I know they had this group called the gas-busters out there. It was a phony ploy, as we all know, but a public relations ploy nevertheless.

I well remember Premier Harris in this House and outside this House. He huffed and he puffed and he huffed and he puffed, and he said, "Oh, those oil companies are awful for raising the price of gasoline," and he did nothing about it. The best he could do was say, "I'll get my big brother after you." He got very exercised about it, very excited about it, and did absolutely nothing about it.

I would have thought that at the last Tory fundraiser — Doug, was there not a big Tory fundraiser last Thursday night? — all the oil barons would have been there in attendance at Mike Harris's big fundraiser. Mike would have had the chance — because he bullies around the poor people; you kick the people who are at the bottom and that's all right, but when it comes to the big oil barons, the champions and the captains of the oil industry, Mike Harris is just like a pussycat when it comes to dealing with them.

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Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): So is Chrétien.

Mr Bradley: He says, "So is." That implies that Doug concedes over there that in fact Harris is a pussycat.

Now, when it comes to bullying other people in society, particularly people at the lower economic end of society, the Premier is large as life. But when it comes to the oil companies, he is very, very quiet. I'm looking forward to seeing him get very vocal.

The Acting Speaker: Summary, the member for Durham East.

Mr O'Toole: It's certainly my privilege to end up this portion of the debate on the interim supply motion and support the motion by the member for Mississauga South, the Honourable Margaret Marland. I have to respond that the member for Nepean did a remarkable job, as usual. The member for Simcoe Centre is a formidable courtroom presence. The member for Northumberland balanced the argument with a seemingly balanced perspective. The member for Brampton North is always on the record as supportive of the government's actions.

But I must respond to the member for St Catharines, because just recently the Liberal health critic had a day in the House here and that weekend they were having a very expensive Liberal fundraiser. The guest speaker of the evening was their federal cousin, the Honourable Allan Rock, Minister of Health. I said to them that day: "Why aren't you asking Mr Rock? He's right here. Why aren't the taxpayers out there with their pickets saying, 'Where's our \$2.4 billion, and where's the support for the hep-C victims?'" Clearly our Minister of Health, the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, has been doing everything she can to convince Allan Rock. Each of us has written to the members.

I have to bring it back to the topic at hand, the health of the economy. In the next week or so, this government will be rolling out a plan; it's called A Salute to Small Business. Maybe I'm letting it out early. Apologies to Minister Palladini. As part of my initial contact with the constituencies in Durham, fortunately I'm being asked to speak to a small business group. In fact, Ron Collis and Adrian Foster of the Clarington Business Group are arranging a breakfast — and you're all invited — which will be held on Tuesday, October 20, at 7:30 in the morning at Silks Café.

The Acting Speaker: Your time is up. Thank you.

Mr O'Toole: At that meeting, we'll be addressing many of these issues.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I would like to continue the debate on interim supply. I just want to respond to a couple of comments made by the member for Durham East that salute small business. The biggest salute small business has gotten from this government is the property tax issue. We warned the government about this salute a year ago. Small business should recognize that what happened was that the business occupancy tax was taken off and then added on to the realty tax. The member for Durham East would know that the banks were paying the BOT, business occupancy tax, at the rate of 75% and small business was at the rate of 25%, dramatically lower. But the salute to small business by Mike Harris was to even it out, to say, "Let's get the banks paying less and let's get small business paying more."

Mr Bradley: The banks are happy.

Mr Phillips: My colleague said, "The banks are happy." The challenge is that the salute that small business sees around the province has been a rather rude salute. I just thought I'd mention that, and I'll mention one

other thing before I get into the major area of my concern at interim supply.

One of the problems Mike Harris has is that this is what he said after the federal budget came out with the cuts to transfer payments: "Common sense tells us the Martin budget will have a significant impact on Ontario. Dominion Bond Rating Service estimates the cost of reductions in federal transfers to Ontario at \$2.3 billion. In the wake of that budget, the spending cut component of which we publicly endorsed, it has obviously become necessary to revise our CSR" — common sense revision.

My point is this: Mike Harris, when those cuts came out, cheered them. He admits, "We publicly endorsed them." He said, "Get on with the cuts." So it's difficult now. Mike Harris, to get elected, said: "I support those cuts. We publicly endorse them" — not just "support." "I endorse them."

I say to the revisionists now —

Mr Bradley: The Gang of Four.

Mr Phillips: — The Gang of Four, who are trying to find somebody to run against, that it's revisionist. You gave it away to get elected. You told the federal government, "We are happy with the \$2.3-billion cut. Thank you. We publicly endorse it." Now of course you find that the public is getting extremely worried about health care, but you said to Martin: "We like it. Thank you. We publicly endorse it."

I want to get that on the record, because it makes it very difficult now, when Mike Harris is talking out of the other side of his mouth, to say: "Maybe in the last election I was wrong. Maybe I'm going to have to say something different this time, that we no longer publicly endorse those cuts."

The area I want to talk about — interim supply, as one of my colleagues said, does give you a little bit of room to range — is that one of the Conservative members talked about two sets of books. The member for Northumberland, I think, used that expression. What we've now got in the province of Ontario are two sets of books, tragically. The Provincial Auditor has pointed that out. What the Provincial Auditor did was to say, "Listen, I'm not going to permit you to report the finances the way you did in the budget."

This is detail now, but in the budget there was \$3.2 billion of "restructuring" money that was written off against last fiscal year, 1997-98. The auditor said, "You can't do that, that's wrong," and forced the government to change. That's why the restructuring was cut from \$3.2 billion to \$1.6 billion. He said that you were reporting the finances incorrectly. One of the Conservative members used the expression "cooking the books" to describe the NDP, but this was cooking the books. If this were a private company, you would never be allowed to do it.

Why did the deficit drop from the time the budget came out — this document — and the public accounts by roughly \$1.6 billion? One reason only: accounting. The Provincial Auditor said, "I'm not going to let you do that; you are misstating the finances of the province," and he cut out \$1.6 billion of restructuring money.

I think the auditor has performed a most worthwhile service for us. Many people here and elsewhere are business people who —

Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): Gerry, tell us about your free flow before the election.

Mr Phillips: I knew this would get the member going, because you don't like to hear about two sets of books and cooking the books. But that's what it was, and if you listen to the Provincial Auditor — I listened to him on the radio. He said, "I wish they had come to me before they tried to do it," because he would not have permitted it.

Hon Mr Turnbull: You did, and his staff told us it was OK.

Mr Phillips: He's now saying the staff said it was all right. I'd love to see that in writing. Mr Turnbull is now saying, "Someone told us we could do the incorrect thing," but now you fixed it.

The second area I'm concerned about — and I raise these things because the public has a right to have a clear understanding of the finances. The new plan for funding school capital —

Hon Mr Turnbull: Is this a change in Liberal policy?

The Acting Speaker: Government whip, come to order.

Mr Phillips: I know Mr Turnbull doesn't want to hear this, but the public wants to hear it. The new plan for funding school capital is a perpetual debt-creating machine. What's going to happen with the new school capital plan?

Mr Baird: More schools.

Mr Phillips: Well, you say that, but it's going to mean, in five years, about \$2 billion of new debt. We were told it will not be on the provincial books; it'll be hidden off the books. It'll be hidden in school boards' budgets or books. I would just say to the government, I don't think the Provincial Auditor will accept that. He will say that is incorrect. You can't move \$2 billion worth of debt off the province's books and try and hide them over in the school boards' budgets. It can't be done. It's \$2 billion, and I think it will be about \$3 billion in 10 years. The credit rating agencies are going to blow the whistle on you. It's wrong, and for the Conservative members — many of them have a business background — if this were your company you'd never be allowed to do this. You couldn't hide this debt in a company that you have 100% control over and not report it as provincial debt.

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The government announced this school plan and got, frankly, some good press from it, with the exception of one editorial that I thought had it bang on. One editorial in the province acknowledged what I believe to be the case, and that is that this is fiscally irresponsible, trying to simply hide the debt. If we were only constructing these schools one time only, I could see doing it, but every year we are going to need to spend in Ontario \$300 million. As I say, we are going to run up an enormous amount of debt off the books.

The third example I wanted to use was Hydro. I hope the Provincial Auditor will comment on it. By the way,

their debt is guaranteed by the province, as we all know, and they pay I think roughly —

Mr Guzzo: Was that the case when you were building Darlington?

Mr Phillips: Mr Guzzo talks about the case of building Darlington. Yes, it was, and Darlington was a decision made by Mike Harris and Ernie Eves when they were in cabinet, many years ago, to build Darlington. Now we're faced with the debt of Hydro —

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Member from Ottawa.

Mr Phillips: Mr Guzzo is barking over there, but here's what Hydro has done. They have written off \$6.6 billion of corporate write-offs against 1997 operations, and they did not follow generally accepted accounting principles. That's what their own report says. This did not follow generally accepted accounting principles. The board at Ontario Hydro used a unique right they've got under what they call the rate-setting authority to do that, to write off almost \$7 billion of expenses against 1997 that should have been written off against 1998 and 1999.

My point is this —

Mr Baird: Tell us about your balanced budget in 1990.

Mr Phillips: The only thing I would say to Mr Baird is to take a look at your own budget and you can see 10 years. I'll show the public. There's 10 years. When Mike Harris became Premier, the debt of the province was \$88 billion.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Member for Nepean, please.

Mr Phillips: Mr Baird said there is a \$90-million surplus in 1989-90. That's not me saying that, that's not the Liberal caucus; that's what Mike Harris said happened in 1989-90, the last year of the Liberal government, a \$90-million surplus. It's the only surplus, by the way, if you look back, since 1968. There hasn't been a Conservative government balance the budget since 1968. I think Les Frost was the Premier then. There's the only balanced budget. You can check and I'll bet whatever you want to bet; I'll bet you a dollar. There's the only balanced budget since 1968. Mike Harris, here it is: \$88 billion when he became Premier. It's now \$110 billion.

The great fiscal person has added \$22 billion to the debt of the province. In fact, the debt as a percent of GDP is actually higher now than when Mike Harris became Premier.

I just point these out because most of my business friends are astonished when I say that. I say: "I know you don't think that the Liberals ever balanced the budget, but look at Mike Harris's budget. There you see a \$90-million surplus, and then you think Mike Harris is managing the finances well. Do you now that he's added \$22 billion to the debt of the province?"

When Mike Harris became Premier, the debt-to-GDP ratio was 28.8%, it's now 30.1%, so it's actually gone up. The reason I raise that is because my business friends just

can't believe that: "That's not true, Gerry. You're making those numbers up." I say, "Look at the budget."

My concern now is that as the government gets closer to the election, the reporting of the finances gets less and less clear. I take my hat off to the auditor. He forced the government to change the set of books they were using to more accurately reflect the state of the finances. But now we have the school capital issue, which without a doubt will be adding roughly \$3 billion to the debt of the province, all off the books. By the way, I see similar things happening in our hospital sector.

A major hospital here in the city of Toronto is floating a debt issue of \$250 million, and there's only really one guarantor of that. It won't be the Toronto hospital, it will be the province, because the Toronto hospital relies virtually exclusively on its revenue from the province of Ontario. There's a hospital going \$250 million into debt and standing behind it will be the government.

That's one reason, by the way, I would say that we haven't seen a credit rating upgrade since Mike Harris became Premier. I remember very well he would really get angry at Bob Rae about the credit rating because there were three credit rating downgrades, as you'll remember, Mr Speaker, from AAA to AA+ to AA to AA-. Now, Mike Harris has been Premier for three years and three months and none of the credit rating agencies have touched Ontario's credit rating. It hasn't been upgraded. It's still the same. Mike Harris has the same credit rating as Bob Rae did. Why is that? It's because of the concern that the credit rating agencies have, first, about the tax cut and, second, about these things that I've talked about: the games.

I will be looking forward to the Provincial Auditor's report, which will be out, I suspect, in November, to see if the auditor comments on any of these issues. But when it becomes more and more difficult to understand the real state of the finances of the province, financial institutions get worried. The best example was when the public accounts, which is the one the Provincial Auditor comments on, came out and it was dramatically different than the budget that was presented only a few months earlier. The reason was that the government tried to report the finances in a way that was unacceptable and, as I say, Hydro is the second example.

I am concerned about the way the province is now funding school capital. I call it a perpetual debt-creating machine. It just keeps creating debt. They keep spending \$300 million a year and paying roughly one twenty fifth of it off. It just keeps getting bigger and bigger on the debt. The importance of that, as we all know, is that the public rely on the reported finances of their government to give them an idea of how well they are doing with their government, and the finances right now, in my opinion, are not being accurately reflected.

I want to talk a little bit about the economy as well. The most interesting page in the budget to me — I think it was certainly the most interesting — was the page that showed what has been driving Ontario's economy. What has been driving Ontario's economy is exports. In fact, page 10 in

the budget shows that in 1991 roughly 29% of Ontario's GDP was exports and in 1996 46% was exports. The importance of that is that our economy now is to an extent perhaps not seen anywhere else in the industrial world dependent on exports. I don't think you'd find any other industrial jurisdiction in the world that relies as heavily on exports as Ontario does. I think 10% of Japan's economy is exports and here in Ontario it's now 46%.

I think 10% of Japan's economy is exports. Here in Ontario it's now 46%. As we all know, in fact a couple of the members talked about it from their own constituencies, it's heavily the auto sector. I'm pleased the economy has been solid in the last period of time. The biggest single reason is because of our exports to the US; 90% of our exports are to the US, as we all know, and well over half of that is auto.

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The reason for raising that is, in my opinion, if we don't develop some business in non-US business — continue to develop our US business but develop non-US business; one hates to be that dependent on one customer — if the US economy turns down — and it will; economies run in cycles and at some stage it will — often auto is the first thing that turns down, just because that is a somewhat discretionary expenditure for most people. My own personal car now is a 1990. I've got almost 300,000 kilometres on it. You can delay purchases.

We should recognize that while we all pat ourselves on the back about Ontario's economy, to a very large extent it has been driven by our auto companies producing the right products here in Ontario and a strong US auto market. If either of those things go bad on us, if we end up with the wrong types of cars or trucks being produced in Ontario — and that is the decision that the auto makers make, they decide what vehicles they will produce at what plants around North America — or if the US economy goes at all soft and we end up with our major product going soft, we have a significant problem.

I just raise that because, for me, making sure, for example, that our infrastructure is in good shape, that our highways and our US-Canada borders can handle traffic quickly — there's a plant in the area I represent where every day a truck pulls up for parts for a Saturn plant in Tennessee. That Saturn truck has to arrive at the plant in Tennessee at the right time or else they're out of business. So investing in our infrastructure is the reason I raise the importance we place on US exports.

On supply, my area of concern — I'm what's called the finance critic for our party — an area of growing concern for me is the way we are now reporting our finances. I think for governments of all political stripes, the closer they get to the election the more tempting it can be to put, shall I say at the very least, the best possible light on the finances. There's a step you go beyond where the best possible light becomes no longer reporting them accurately. The auditor caught us not reporting them accurately in the budget. Now we've got them properly reported in the public accounts. But I think there are two or three other areas where I'm significantly concerned. With that

said, I'd like to allow some of my colleagues to continue the debate on interim supply.

Mr John Garretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I just want to follow up on a comment that was made earlier by one of the other members dealing with the gas situation over the weekend. I don't know whether you heard this report, Mr Speaker, but I heard this on CBC Radio at least three or four times on Saturday morning. We heard the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations of this province, Minister Tsubouchi, actually blame the five cent per litre gasoline increase on the fact that our three gas-busters from this Legislature were not on duty last week.

He said something to the effect of, "Isn't it ironic that the major gas companies have actually increased the gas by five cents per litre because it was the first weekend that the gas-busters" — who are something like our crime commissioners, you may recall, that we have in this Legislature — "weren't on duty." If he really wants the people of the province to believe that the major gas companies are real worried about the fact that three or four MPPs are running around the province checking gas prices and that if somehow they're not on duty the gas prices go up, I think that is just the height of — I don't know what it is, but certainly the system doesn't work that way. It gave me a good belly laugh Saturday morning when I heard that, because the minister said it in all seriousness and presumably he meant it or else he wouldn't have given that interview.

The other point I'd like to talk about very briefly is the point that has already been made by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, and that deals with the total real estate tax chaos we have currently in this province. You may recall that during September the main reason that was given why we were coming back on September 28 was basically to deal with two issues. Issue number one was the boards that were on strike at the time. Some of the school boards weren't opening their properties or some of them were on strike. The federations had gone on strike and had to be dealt with quickly, and this House got together, you may recall, and in one day we actually assed that bill.

The other reason was the fact that the Minister of Finance felt it necessary for the sixth time this year — six times in one year. For a man who likes to pride himself on being very competent in these matters, for the sixth time this year he had to introduce yet another bill to try to deal with the property tax chaos because he or his ministry didn't get it right the first five or six times. That was the reason we were given. It is more than two weeks after the house was opened and that bill to extend the appeal time as been given one day of debate.

I know all the other issues that we've dealt with over the last two weeks, and we've had a lot of evening sittings as well, are very important. But to the property taxpaying public of this province there is nothing more important currently than knowing that they will have the right to appeal their assessment — now that they know what their bill is finally because municipalities weren't able to get these bills out earlier — until the end of October.

What's happened? The bill hasn't been called. It has been called once.

I know the game the government's playing. The government somehow wants to shift the problem on to the opposition by saying, "We will delay calling the bill as long as possible because you will then be forced to pass it somewhere down the line before the end of October," or else the property taxpayers, all those people who want to appeal, are on our backs.

I would just like the people of Ontario to know not to be fooled at all by that kind of strategy. We have the right to debate a bill. We've already indicated that we will give it swift passage. That doesn't mean one day of debate, which basically means about two hours. When we talk about a day's debate, we're talking about two, or at the maximum three hours. We want to have the right to go through that bill clause by clause to make sure the minister has it right this time around. He hasn't had it right for six times. We may have some amendments to that bill because undoubtedly there may be other things that may be wrong again and we don't want to deal with another property tax bill again later on this year.

Why is the government House leader not calling the bill? I have no idea. There are a lot of other important pieces of legislation that we've dealt with, to be sure, but I don't think there's anything more important to the property taxpayers of Ontario than to get that bill called. That's why earlier in question period today we challenged the Minister of Finance and the House leader: "Call the bill in. Let's debate it. Let's give it some further debate." We, for example, on our side have not had an opportunity yet to have our leadoff speaker in that.

To underline the chaos that is out there, I would like to quote from a letter that was sent by an MPP to the Minister of Finance. That MPP says: "I write to you today regarding the local Hamilton-Wentworth property tax fiasco." It's a "property tax fiasco." Then he goes through all the ifs, ands and buts.

He says, "The entire business and residential community is outraged, and my city and region are being ravaged." You would think that this came from an opposition MPP, somebody obviously who is experiencing this, from the comment that person is getting from the taxpayers etc. So you would think this is probably something that comes from an opposition MPP. It's not from an opposition MPP. It is from a government MPP, the member for Hamilton-Mountain.

He's saying, "The entire business and residential community is outraged, and my city and region are being ravaged." Let me tell you, from what we are hearing, it is not only happening in Hamilton-Wentworth, it is happening throughout Ontario. In my own community, I know of dozens of situations where for small commercial taxpayers that may have an employment base of one, two or three employees, their property taxes have gone up in one case from \$4,000 to \$12,000 per year, 300%, and in other cases — that just come to mind — it was from \$3,600 to well over \$8,000 per year. We can just go on and on.

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I attended a meeting in Kingston West, being the former Pittsburgh township, the other day. This is the part of my municipality, you will remember, that was restructured. An agreement was signed, of which the province is part, to the effect that the tax increase would not be more than 3%. I expected to meet with about five or six people. Lo and behold, I walked into this room and there must have been at least 80, 90 or maybe 100 people, and they all had the same complaint. They were all saying, "Why is it that my assessment has actually gone down, yet the property taxes, the total bill compared to last year, have gone up by 20%, 30% and 40%?"

It is not because of the high taxes levied by council in Kingston. It is all a result of downloading. For ministers of the crown to stand up in this House on a day-to-day basis, and outside the House as well, and still maintain that the downloading is a revenue-neutral move, the fact that a lot of the social housing, a lot of the health care services, public health, ambulances, a lot of the welfare costs etc are now being paid for by the local municipalities rather than here at the provincial level — I was almost going to say something unparliamentary, Mr Speaker. I think that what I was going to say is the actual truth of the situation, but I won't say it, because I do not want to challenge your authority or put you in a place where even though you might agree with me — I'm not sure but you might agree with me — and you would say yes, this is something different than it was portrayed to be earlier on.

I ask the government to bring the bill forward. Let's debate it. Let's give it another two days of debate, that's all we're asking for, two days meaning anywhere from about four to six hours of debate. Undoubtedly you've made more mistakes in that bill — you've already done it five times before — and surely you want to make sure that the opposition finds all the errors in the bill this time around, proposes the proper amendments and we get it over and done with.

As a matter of fact, this Bill 61 wouldn't have been necessary at all if the government had accepted our amendments when the last bill came through last spring. We said at that point in time, because of all the changes that are taking place in the province, give the people of Ontario 60 days from the date they receive their last property tax bill to determine whether they want to appeal their assessment, because it's only with the last bill that they can compare what they're paying this year to what they were paying last year and say, "Yes, it has gone up unreasonably," yes or no.

It's unfortunate. It's my understanding from some of the ministry's own figures that they expect upwards of 600,000 assessment appeals. I'm sure the average person out there somehow thinks that either an assessment officer or somebody came around to evaluate their property, to give it a market value. That's the basis on which it was sold. Of course we all know that isn't so, that most of these models that have been used in different neighbourhoods, whether we're talking about residential or com-

mercial, are all computer-oriented and driven. There have been major mistakes on that.

I'm not blaming the assessment people for that. They had very little time. They warned us last January and February. We had meetings with them and they had meetings with the Minister of Finance, and they basically said: "We can't go into this system this quickly. There are going to be huge problems across the province." That's exactly what happened, because each individual property has not been assessed for market value. There have been computer-driven models that look at a whole neighbourhood, and some properties are way off on both sides, either assessed too low or way too high. You've left an impression with people out there that you're doing one thing, but on the other hand you're doing something totally different. Bring the bill forward, let's discuss it and let's bring some amendments to it, and then we can carry on with it.

The other issue I want to talk about is this report from the provincial task force on homelessness. The reason I want to talk about it is that last week I had the opportunity to sit in estimates for my caucus, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing was there to deal with the estimates in his department. Let there be absolutely no mistake about it: This government does not feel it has any responsibility whatsoever for any kind of social housing in this province. Number one, they've offloaded all the existing agreements that are out there between the province and the non-profits and the co-ops and they've downloaded them all to the local municipalities. That's number one.

But the minister, in the comments he made during estimates, said it is not the government's responsibility to be involved in creating any kind of housing. He talked in very general terms about creating an economic climate for housing and that sort of thing, and yes, that is important. But the government has to go further than that. We know that to a certain extent the federal government is completely out of the housing business also, so both the federal and the provincial governments are saying it's the local municipalities' problem. It's the same thing that is being recommended in this provincial task force on homelessness. This report is basically saying that it is not the province's responsibility; it is totally the responsibility of either the federal government, in dealing with certain groups that come into the country and how they should be funded when they're first here, or of the municipalities. The provincial government may play some sort of coordinating role, but basically it's a municipal problem.

I would remind all the members here that we have to think back a little bit into history and think how a lot of these housing programs after the Second World War got started. They all got started by both CMHC at the federal level and an enlightened government at the time at the provincial level. There was a recognition there that an awful lot of people could not be housed properly if it was totally left to the local municipality. It's only the federal and provincial governments that have the adequacy of resources to make sure there is enough money for housing,

either in the construction of housing or in supplementing the rent of people on welfare.

It's interesting. I don't know how much the average person makes on welfare — I know it depends on the number of children you have — but it would be somewhere between \$1,100 and \$1,400. According to all the guidelines out there right now, the maximum that a person should spend on rent is about 30%. So if you take somebody on welfare, whether they have one, two or three children, they should be spending somewhere between \$350 and \$550, that being 30% of their total income, on housing.

Mr Speaker, you and I know that to create a new unit of housing, whether it's the province that does it, whether it's private industry that does it, whether it's the federal government or the local municipality that does it, it's going to cost much more than \$350 to \$550 per month to create that unit. Every unit that is being created across this province, depending upon land costs, would range anywhere from, I don't know, \$75,000 to \$100,000. If you just look at the carrying costs of that unit, even with the low interest rates we have today, and the taxes and the utilities you would have to pay on a unit like that, you come up with much more than \$350 to \$550 per month, which is the maximum that a family on welfare should have to spend on their housing.

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The point I'm simply trying to make is this: Yes, things can be done by private enterprise, you can make it more attractive to get back into the housing industry, but there is no way that private enterprise will ever be able to create units at a cost that is affordable to the people on welfare on the basis of 30% of their monthly allowance or monthly money going towards rent. That seems to be sort of forgotten in the whole question.

So what do you do? You can do one of two things: You can either subsidize the builder in building the units to bring the per unit cost down to a much lower rate, or you have to give a rent supplement to the people who don't have the income to be able to afford the market rent of the new unit. It's got to be either one system or the other system.

It was very interesting. When the Minister of Housing was in estimates, he said he was all in favour of the rent supplements, that the province should not be building any units itself; it should all be done on a rent supplement system. I said: "Okay. If you really believe in that, let's take a look at your budget for the coming year. Are you making more money available for rent supplement units?"

In actual fact, if you look at the estimates, the amount of money that's being made available for rent supplements for the coming year is less than it was last year and the number of units that are going to be subsidized are less than last year, which basically means they haven't even allocated enough money for the rent supplement units that are out there this year, let alone any new units they talk about that ought to be constructed either by private industry or by the local municipal government.

What I'm saying is that if we really want to do something about the problem of homelessness of the people who are out there, a commitment has to be made probably by all three levels of government — by the federal, provincial and local levels of government, and there's a number of different ways in which you can do it — whereby they collectively subsidize the builders and give rent supplement money to the people who are living in these units. But it has to be done either one way or the other. To say, "It is no longer our responsibility; give it to the next level of government," is simply not going to work.

With that, I will now turn over the balance of our time to our House leader.

Mr Bradley: Thank you very much, to the member for Kingston and The Islands, for first of all bringing to this House so many insightful arguments in favour of a more progressive approach to the issues we see confronting the province.

I want to deal with the issue of health care, and at the risk of being a bit parochial, if I might focus in on the Niagara Peninsula because it is representative of much of Ontario when it comes to health care.

I should indicate clearly that people in our part of the province are extremely unhappy with the amount of money that is being allocated to hospitals to be able to operate. The operating costs of a hospital are considerable. Everyone understands that. The provincial government contributes absolutely nothing, nor has any provincial government, to the cost of equipment; that is, raised the funds for that raised at the local level. Much of the capital cost — that is the building costs and the new additions to the hospitals — comes out of the local donor to the hospital causes as opposed to the province. It really means it puts a lot of pressure on communities that perhaps have experienced a lot of unemployment.

What we're seeing in our area in terms of operating is a substantial difference in the kind of service that is available to patients. Hospitals would love to give first-class, top-level care to all the patients who come to them. The people working in hospitals today — far fewer in number, I might add, than just a few years ago — would like to be able to provide excellent service to the patients. Unfortunately, with the significant cutbacks in the funding for the operation of our hospitals, this is not the case.

I had a gentleman in my constituency office the other day whose wife is afflicted with cancer. He was very perturbed by the kind of care that would be available to him within the Hamilton-Niagara area. He mentioned, for instance, that in the hospital where his wife was receiving some treatment, parts of the hospital were actually dirty. Now is this because the hospital wants it to be that way? No, it's because they have been forced to fire so many people out of the system, both medical — that is, the nurses, nurses' aides and others who provide medical care — and also non-medical staff in these hospitals.

I defy anyone on the government side to say to the people of this province that the kind of hospital care that was available 10 years ago is available today. It simply is not. The people of this province realize it. People who were in

the hospital a dozen or 10 years ago compare that to an experience today and say it's substantially different. Far fewer nurses and other medical staff are available to meet their needs. In fact, it is said that if you're sick and going into the hospital, you had better have a relative or a good friend there to both look after you and advocate for you, because the people working in the hospitals are stretched to the absolute limit, working extremely hard under stressful conditions, and yet this government tries to portray the hospital system in this province as being satisfactory when most people in this province would not agree with this government.

They had money to give away in the tax break. In fact, it seems that any of the funding they get from a senior level of government, in this case the federal government, they simply take and give away in a tax cut, a tax cut which benefits the wealthiest people in our province the most in terms of the actual dollars that are in their pockets.

There are hospitals right across this province, including the Niagara region, that are now running deficits. Oh, I hear the government members get up and say: "Isn't it nice? We are going to balance our budget." They complain about other levels of government. When they're complaining about the local level being perturbed about the amount of money going to local transfer agencies, I remind them that this government will brag that it balances its budget next year; in fact it could have balanced it earlier if it had not given up the tax cut. If it had not given up the revenue from the tax cut, it would be balanced now.

Be that as it may, as the lawyers say, nevertheless the government in this case is underfunding our hospital system. It is projected that \$43 million less will be available in Niagara for the funding of our hospitals. Now the hospital restructuring commission or, as I call it, the hospital destruction commission — with plenty of Tories on it, I might add — has been going around the province closing hospitals. Mike Harris, during the election campaign of 1995, said in May 1995 to the television audience when Robert Fisher of Global TV asked him the question, "Does your policy contemplate the closing of hospitals?" — I quote Mike Harris and the member for Nepean can tell me if I'm wrong in this quote — "Certainly, Robert, I can guarantee it's not my plan to close hospitals." May I repeat that so that all can hear. "Certainly, Robert, I can guarantee you it's not my plan to close hospitals." Thirty-five hospitals have been closed or forced to amalgamate in this province to this point in time, and there will be more.

Can you envision what would happen, if you had a second term of a Conservative government, to all these hospitals? They would be closing them left and right, but right now they're a little bit leery. They're saying: "Oh, Mike Harris is really a nice guy. You know, the worst is over. Don't worry." I can tell you, a second term —

Mr Baird: Dalton McGuinty would be closing them left and right. If you like Mike Harris, you will love him.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean.

Mr Bradley: — of the Reform-a-Tory government we have here, the Reform Party we have in power — with a few exceptions most who sit in the benches are Reformers

— the Reform Party that sits there will relish what it can do to the health care system.

If you want to see what the plan is, simply look south of the border. Read what's happening in the various states where they have small-c conservative Republican governors and Republican state legislatures. They're already privatized, but you're seeing more and more a hospital system and a medical care system which favours those who have money to those who do not.

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One thing we can all be proud of, members of three political parties in the history of this province in years gone by, is that we have had a system which, generally speaking, is equally accessible to all. I know there are some aberrations. I have heard of those aberrations and there have been reports, but generally speaking in this province the kind of medical care you get has not been dependent upon how much money you have in your wallet or your bank account or in your assets. We can be justifiably proud of that.

That is changing. What you're seeing happening in the United States, where you have these Republican legislatures and Republican governors, is a widening gap between the very rich people and the very poor people. More and more people are being marginalized to the lower end of the economic scale. You see, what this government really likes, not every member but a lot of members of this government, is to see a lowering of wages. They think that people who don't play the stock market and who aren't in the upper echelons of business somehow should get paid a lot less than others. So they applaud downsizing, restructuring — they would call it rightsizing — where companies and business may be making unprecedented profits, the most profit they've ever made, while at the same time they're firing people out the door.

Everybody understands but doesn't like it when there's a difficult economic time and a company's service or product is not being purchased. Everyone understands those layoffs. They don't like them, they want a social safety net for those hit by it, but they understand it. What they don't understand is what many members of this government condone, where the big business downsizes and rationalizes so that it can get a sudden blip in the stock market. It's usually not a long-term blip in the stock market, and those people are out in the street.

I ask, "Where are people going to work?" I see the banks constantly encouraging people to not deal with tellers. "You can get this service at the machine," they will say. If you want to talk to a teller, to a human being, they will tell you it's generational. "You people want to talk to tellers, but the young people are prepared to simply have a machine before them." I become concerned when I see that many jobs are disappearing out there, because there are not going to be some other jobs available.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: The member for York Centre tells me that Quebec has closed 53 hospitals since Bouchard came to power. That's interesting, because Mike Harris and Lucien Bouchard have a lot in common in certain areas. I

ask the member to look at the stand on wanting to wrest power from the national government and give it to the provincial government. There's an unholy alliance.

I'm glad Mr Palladini brought this to my attention. He doesn't mind me saying this publicly, I'm sure. He's a good friend and he wouldn't mind. I appreciate his reminding me of that. But I say there's an unholy alliance between Lucien Bouchard and Mike Harris when it comes to trying to pry power away from the national government, whatever government that happens to be, the national level of government, and put it in the hands of the provinces. I chastise Lucien Bouchard for closing 53 hospitals. Mike Harris is trying to catch up to him.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): What about Jean Chrétien and the unemployment fund?

Mr Bradley: I want to get into the field of education, because I know the member wants me to talk about education, but before I do, I want to mention that in St Catharines we have a doctor, an ophthalmologist, whose patients can no longer see him because apparently they've reached a cap. So the people are now phoning the constituency offices.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Oh, rich people would be able to do it. Don't worry, rich people could go across the border and get their eyes looked after or whatever. But the average person is now not able to see this doctor in St Catharines because of a cap this government has put on the allocation of funds for that purpose.

I want to say as well that I raised the issue of Ian Strathern, a young gentleman of the age of 22 who lives in Niagara Falls who is a quadriplegic as a result of a very unfortunate accident playing hockey. His family is now spending some \$1,500 a week on additional health care, or about \$6,000 a month, because they want to have him at home. They don't want to have him in a hospital setting; they want to have him at home. So far, the family has been unable to obtain the necessary assistance from the Ministry of Health and the ministry responsible for long-term care to be able to have this service provided.

What was particularly disconcerting was when Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the Liberal Party, spoke to the chamber of commerce in St Catharines on September 30, and this gentleman who was in the audience — I suspect he's a person who would not be unfriendly to the Conservative government — got up and asked a question after, brought us up to date on his son and said in fact what's happening now is the Ministry of Health is going to intervene to prevent him and his family from appealing to the Health Services Appeal Board, actively opposing their appeal for more service for their son.

This was raised originally when they went to Mike Harris at the Tory fundraiser in St Catharines, a very successful fundraiser, I might add, because anybody and everybody with money was there, but these people came because they knew the Premier would be there. The Premier, on that occasion, on about May 7 of this year, promised that he was on their side and he would do

something about it. I was hopeful that would be the case, I really was, and nothing was raised in this House. There was no public discussion of this issue.

Then, on June 24, there was another report in the newspaper that nothing in fact had transpired. Dalton McGuinty rose in the House to raise the issue with the Premier. The assumption was that something would be done. So it's September 30, and we hear nothing has been done yet, but there was some discussion that as a result of the question Mr McGuinty responded to at the chamber of commerce meeting, perhaps the government would do something about it. I didn't get up the next day in the House to ask. I wanted to give them, again, a period of time to be able to react to it.

Then I got up last Thursday, I think in a very responsible and moderate and low-key way, to ask what was happening. When I rose, I got the answer that the government in fact had not addressed this issue —

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: — that actively, I say to my friend from Ottawa-Rideau, the Ministry of Health has intervened to block an appeal to the Health Services Appeal Board for this person who is quadriplegic and requires 24-hour care, which is most unfortunate. I hope that will change. I hope something will transpire that will help this family out, but it's indicative of what's happening in health care in our province today, and I find that most unfortunate.

I heard the Minister of Health today say, "There's \$2 billion going out for restructuring." A lot of that money is going to pay the severance pay for nurses who are being fired out the door because this government is, overall, going to give less money to the operation of hospitals.

In education the government set out to establish a crisis, because what the extreme right wing does is try to bring into disrepute a public institution and then come forward with a radical solution when that institution is brought into disrepute. That's most unfortunate.

What you should be doing, instead of engaging in a propaganda campaign where you are spending millions upon millions of dollars in self-serving propaganda, no matter what it's about, whether it's health care, education, environment or the signs on the highway with Mike Harris's name — I would think that if Mr Palladini were still the minister we wouldn't see those propaganda signs. He would want to see the money spent on public transportation and not on propaganda signs with the Premier saying, "Your Ontario tax dollars at work, Premier Harris." I can tell you where you see that. You see that in the United States, with governor whoever at the bottom, and so Governor Harris has his name at the bottom of these signs.

All the material you see happening, all the advertising we're seeing, is as a result of this government simply blowing money on useless advertising while it's cutting back in other areas.

I would think that what you would want to do is enlist the support, for instance, of members of the teaching profession instead of targeting them. I know it's popular in some quarters to bash the teachers. These are people who

have to deliver the education services on the front line. It's not the way it was when most of us went to school. It is not that way. The students who come to the school system today often have far more challenges to meet at home and within society than was the case when those of us who are here went to school. It's a different circumstance we're facing today in our education system.

1720

There are a lot of reforms that are brought forward that the NDP agree with. In fact, it was the NDP commission, commissioned by Dave Cooke, that brought forward some of these suggestions.

Mr Pouliot: Oh, come on.

Interjection: He's being nice.

Mr Bradley: I'm being nice in this case.

There are some things that we agree with as well. The two opposition parties would find some commonality of interest in some of the things being brought forward by the government: not the underfunding of the system, not the bashing of the teachers, not the movement towards privatization of schools that we see happening. We think what you should be doing is enlisting the support of those people.

Property taxes in the Niagara region are something to behold. Businesses and individuals in our part of the province are really annoyed and angry because in the exchange of services between the provincial government and the local government there was a \$21-million difference. Now it's down to \$18 million, but the so-called exchange that took place has left us \$18 million less. What does that mean? It means that the local government had to make even more drastic cuts in services and it meant as well that they had to raise taxes.

The Tory members all pointed and said: "Oh, it's the regional government. We didn't raise those taxes." But of course, what happened was they downloaded on to the municipality items which cost \$18 million additionally, and they left on half the cost of education. A lot of people picked up their tax bill and said, "With all this downloading, we thought the province took all of the education costs," but they didn't. Of course, the province sets that mill rate; it's not the local people setting that mill rate.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Members for Lake Nipigon and Hamilton Centre, please.

Mr Bradley: I look at the Ukrainian Black Sea Hall in St Catharines. I look at some other institutions that provide medical services which are being hit with higher and higher property taxes. I see Women's Place and Bethlehem Project out having to raise funds, which in years gone by were largely provided by the provincial government. We see some significant change taking place. But it has not changed for the better. If you are wealthy, if you are powerful, if you are rich in this province, you'll be applauding the changes this government is bringing forward. If not, you certainly won't be.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I just want to say to the House that if you want to know what the

numbers are re the budget and how the economy of this government is unfolding, listen to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. He has it down. When he comes into the House, he's prepared. He knows the numbers. He can give them to you every time and they're generally, as our Treasurer used to say when we were in government, spot on.

The member for St Catharines talks about how in this province today, because of the way things are unfolding, the rich are well off, those who are in a position of some privilege are doing well. This government spends a lot of time in Japan, in Italy, in Germany, on the golf courses of the province. They should spend some time on Main Street, Ontario, and talk to the people at the grassroots who are out there very anxious and nervous about the economy of this province. You've got to take those numbers and you've got to translate them into a language that people understand.

There are three things that this government is good at spinning. One is the question of welfare, the second is the issue of jobs and, of course, the third is the economy. They have their own perspective on it, of course, a perspective that is very elitist and centrist and is one that is shared, I'm sure, by a small group of people who are doing quite well at this particular point in time. But it's not the perspective that you'll get from John or Jane out there trying to put bread on the table, pay the rent and put clothing on the backs of kids.

Welfare: The numbers on welfare, they say, are down. The reason that numbers on welfare are down is twofold. One, you've changed the definition. You've raised the bar. You've made it tougher for people on welfare to get welfare. The criticism that you make of the federal government on EI, you've done the very same on welfare, the same idea.

Jobs: Why are jobs, if they are at all, going up? It's because you have taken good jobs and you've turned them into two or three or four part-time jobs.

Hon Mr Turnbull: I thought I would just put on the record a few facts with respect to the debate this afternoon by some of the Liberal members. Casting back to 1990 — and I know my friends in the NDP will remember this with gritted teeth — during the 1990 election the Liberals had the audacity to suggest that they were going to have a balanced budget again. They promised a balanced budget, and the year before they said, "Oh, we had a balanced budget, we had a surplus."

Let's examine what happened. In the 1989-90 budget they had projected a deficit of some \$550 million. The federal government came in with an unusual transfer of funds, which wasn't anticipated, of \$880 million. Then what happened was they showed a surplus of \$90 million. Let's consider a \$90-million surplus in the context that had they not got that unusual transfer, they would have had an even larger deficit than they had projected, because otherwise they would have had to have had a surplus of \$338 million. They absolutely failed in that test. In 1990 they said they were going to have a balanced budget, but

as the NDP found to their chagrin, there was a \$3-billion deficit when they came in.

Then there was further debate this afternoon about cuts. The only health care cuts are from the federal government. You know that and you should ask Allan Rock and the Prime Minister to put them back —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Time has expired. Questions and comments?

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'm pleased to respond to my colleagues who spoke very articulately this afternoon, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, my friend from Kingston and The Islands and my friend from St Catharines, who each in their own way pointed out some of the smoke and mirrors taking place here in Ontario.

But I want to address one area and that was by the member for York Mills, who just finished speaking. I have to respond to this because I must tell the member for York Mills, no matter what you say, in the last 30 years there has only been one government that had more than a balanced budget. It was in 1988-89, and you're right, you were almost correct, it was a surplus of \$91 million. We looked at what we were doing at the time and we helped pay down the accumulated debt. Two thirds of the accumulated debt —

Hon Mr Turnbull: You were budgeting a deficit.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Members for York Mills and Nepean.

Mr Patten: Two thirds of the accumulated debt that we have in this province — it's now verging on \$100 billion, maybe just over \$100 billion — has been accumulated since 1990. So I just want the member for York Mills to have an appreciation of the difficulty, as he knows, of balancing the budget. But the only time, I'll remind him, it was done was under a Liberal government in 1988-89.

Finally, I would like to say that because today is the use of resources, this particular bill on the interim supply, seems to me that this government could look very carefully at the two priorities for people in this province: their health care and their education. People are suffering in those particular areas and need some support.

Mr Pouliot: Oh, what a burden to listen to the Liberals imitate the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. This government, "You balanced the budget," "You love me, you love me not," "No, we did balance the budget."

I'll tell you what, Speaker. When we were elected, when we formed the government in 1990, we opened the cupboard, because they had said when you open the cupboard you will have a surplus. In the cupboard, there was no note — an IOU for \$3 billion. That's the reality.

Heaven forbid if the Liberals ever get to form the government. If the Liberals ever get to form the government, I guarantee that they will keep every Tory promise. And yes, oh, what a burden their friends in Ottawa are, those great Satans, starting with the Prime Minister cutting health to the provinces, Sergeant Pepper and the group. You can go down the line and at every opportunity the

federal Liberals have balanced the budget on the backs of the provinces. We know that. So when we see the fanfare, the audacity, the gall of the official opposition, I say, you're both the same. Go to the backroom and make up.

Interjections.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): No, no, no, no. Oh, Gilles.

Mr Baird: Time.

Mr Pouliot: Yes, yes.

Parliamentary assistant, flash that American Express the taxpayers give you. Invite your friends to dinner. Those are the circles you court. You're the same people. There's no difference. So when you have a little fight at 5:30 on a Tuesday night, don't take it too seriously because you'll spend a lot of time, you two, making up. It's in your nature. Thank God for the New Democrats.

1730

Mr Gerretsen: It always amazes me in this House how people are more interested in what happened 10 years ago rather than what should be happening right now or next year or as we go into the 21st century. That's what the people of Ontario are interested in.

History is of some importance and some interest, but people are really interested in what our health care system is going to look like, next year and today. Will it be available for us? What will our educational system look like a year from now and today? What most people see out there is chaos, absolute chaos. Whether we're talking about the 10 to 12 schools that are projected to be closing in my area, for example, whether we're talking about the 35 hospitals that are set to close in this province that the member for St Catharines has talked about, it doesn't matter. There's chaos out there and people do not like chaos.

In my community, a hospital that has been around for 153 years, the Hotel Dieu Hospital, operated by the religious hospitaliers of St Joseph, is set to close. The theory is we're closing some of these hospitals and we're somehow putting more money into the CACs, the community access centres. That's what the government would like people to believe, except it's not happening. Two thousand patients in my area have been cut off from home care services over the next six months or so. These are the people who have come to rely on these services and who need these services.

I say, do not close hospitals, and provide adequate funding for home care. That's what the people of Ontario are really interested in. It all could have been provided if it had not been for your ill-fated tax cut.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I'm just waiting to see the enormous amount of time the Liberals generously left us, since they denied equally splitting it. While I'm waiting for that to come up, let's just talk a bit about the history because that seems to be where some of the Liberals want to go.

The fact of the matter is, it is true that while the Liberals were in power and bragging about a \$25-million

surplus — that's what they ran their election platform on, assuming, as a lot of us did when they were 50-plus per cent in the polls — it looked like Peterson was going to return with a huge majority and they thought, "Well, nobody will know the difference so we'll just do a fast little manoeuvre here and we'll say there's a \$25-million surplus," but the reality is, as we know, they didn't win the election and when we got there we were \$3 billion in the hole and facing the deepest recession since the 1930s.

Interjection: It is not true.

Mr Christopherson: I hear one of the members saying it's not true. The fact of the matter is I was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance and I can tell you it is true. That's exactly what happened.

The other reality with the Libs, since we're talking about the Libs, is that during the boom time of the 1980s, an incredible boom, I think arguably percentage-wise even bigger than the one we're in, that short period in the late 1980s, they did absolutely nothing about the finances of this province. It was just business as usual. So speeches and lectures coming from them are not accepted, certainly not by this member of the House.

Mr Gerretsen: You wanted more spending. What are you talking about?

Mr Bradley: You wanted to spend more.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: Listen to them. Listen to them. There you go. That's what happens when you touch a nerve. Look. See? That's what happens.

Where are we right now? We've got the Liberals standing up, making all kinds of promises about the fact that they're going to spend money on health care, they're going to spend money on education, they're going to spend money on this and spend money on that. The reality is they were planning to pay for that with what we would call the tainted Tory surplus by virtue of how you would have gotten it.

But more to the point is that as a result of what's going on on Wall Street and with the markets and economies around the world, that surplus won't be there. In fact, their leader has already started to change his tune. Instead of saying they are going to invest in health care and education, now the Liberal leader is saying they're going to build walls around it. So he's already adjusting for the fiscal reality that's not working in their favour.

Interjection: Building walls around the cuts?

Mr Christopherson: Now what does this mean? My colleague our finance critic asks me, "Are they going to build walls around the cuts?" They're certainly going to institutionalize all the cuts and they're going to institutionalize your much-ballyhooed tax cut that of course only your rich friends are benefiting from, but the Liberals are going to leave that in place. So what does it mean? What it means is, all of these promises about investing and reinvesting in health care and education are hollow promises. They don't have one more red cent to invest in those areas than the current Tory government and they're not planning to change the macroeconomic approach of this

Tory government. That's where my friend from Lake Nipigon is right when he says there's no difference.

What we are saying is different. I realize that the Tories and their very fabulously wealthy friends who have got tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of dollars in personal benefits from the tax cut won't like our message, but for the vast majority of the population who are paying for that tax cut through school closures, through hospital closures, through the environment ministry being gutted, all of the list of attacks that this government has perpetrated upon communities, the fact of the matter is that reinvesting the money that would be accrued from taking those who earn \$80,000 a year or more and saying: "You have an obligation. You've benefited very well from the economy of the past three years, more than most, fabulously more than most. You have an obligation to provide the funds necessary for us to bring back our health care system and bring back our education system" — for that top 6%, and only 6% of the population make that kind of money, we will go back to the 1995 tax rate so that we will have between \$1 billion and \$2 billion of real money that can be reinvested in health care and in education.

I offer up that as the very clear distinction between the two alternatives to the Tory government. For those who are already doing very well by the 30% tax cut, I suspect they're going to stay with you. Why wouldn't they? It's in their best interest to do so. For those who for a whole host of reasons feel that this province needs a change, that we can't afford to have Mike Harris stay in the Premier's office a day longer than necessary, then there is an alternative to the official opposition that once again, according to some polls, are up around that magic 50% number, the one that caused them to trip and fall at least two other times before. There is an alternative because they won't provide a real change. They don't have the money.

1740

At the end of the day, it would seem that in our political time period, the immediate time around us, the bottom line is the bottom line; it's going to be dollars. You can talk about policy changes in health care and that's crucial, and we can talk about policy changes in education and that's also crucial, but in my community, where the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospital is facing a \$38-million deficit and where my school board is looking at closing between 15 and 20 schools, what really matters is money, and the Liberal alternative doesn't provide any new money. That's an important distinction, and I think it will become a crucial turning point in the next election, because without the promises they make, they aren't any different from the Mike Harris government.

They have to have the money in order to respond to the promises they're making. You cannot stand up and say that you're going to condemn Mike Harris for what he is doing to hospitals and health care and say that you're going to reinvest money and not say where the money is coming from. You can't say that you're going to turn around and put the \$1 billion or some portion of it back into the education system and not say where the money is coming from. Those are crucial distinctions that need to be

and will be made in the campaign. At the end of the day what really matters is that people will have a choice, and it will be a choice between continuing the Mike Harris agenda or saying no, that this has been a bad experiment for the province and that we've got to go back to the kind of caring, compassionate province that we have been in the past. The alternative to the Tory government to do that is Howard Hampton and the New Democratic Party. The Liberals, at the end of the day, don't offer anything.

In the time I have left, I would like to just focus on the letter that Trevor Pettit sent because I think it's quite telling. It's dated September 25, so it's important to understand that this is very timely; this is not something from the archives. He is writing to Ernie Eves, and basically my legislative colleague the member for Hamilton Mountain, Trevor Pettit, is in deep, serious political trouble, and this is a plea from him to the Minister of Finance to please do something to bail him out. Even he says in his opening line, "I write to you today regarding the local Hamilton-Wentworth property tax fiasco." He calls it a fiasco because he's facing the political reality. How many times have I stood here and said that political reality is going to face each and every one of you when you go out and talk to taxpayers on the doorstep? That's what is happening. They're coming to him, and he's calling it a tax fiasco. What else does he say?

Also, which I find surprising politically as well as offensive personally, he takes a shot at the council while he purports to be bailing them out. He says, "The whole Who Does What? exercise would be revenue-neutral if Hamilton-Wentworth were to find 3% in savings." What he's saying is that they didn't find the 3% which would have saved his skin, because this government said they wouldn't make any changes that would cause property taxes to go up. You said that the downloading would be revenue-neutral. That's not what happened. My community of Hamilton-Wentworth is in the hole by \$36 million.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): That's their fault.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Brant-Haldimand, can you come to order, please.

Mrs Marland has moved government notice of motion 7. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Essex South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations concerning gas prices. This matter will be debated today at 10 to 6. Is he here?

Interjection.

The Speaker: We will wait until he gets here.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Thank you, Speaker, for your patience. I was in committee and was looking more to being here towards 6 o'clock.

I'm not here so much today to debate the issue of the fact that we all observe that gasoline prices seem to magically jump every weekend, especially prior to holidays. I'm here essentially to get the minister, when he's on the bandwagon, to say that he's in fact going to do something. That's all any of us want him to do. We're all tired of seeing gasoline prices hiked just before long weekends.

We heard the Premier as far back as September 1997, I think it was, over a year ago, when we brought this issue to the Legislature. He jumped on the bandwagon and said, "I think the taxpayers of Ontario, the gasoline buyers, are being gouged and I'm going to bring the oil companies to heel." Well, he didn't do anything, and that's all we're asking. Put your money where your mouth is.

The minister has said, in essence — they went to a meeting, I think it was last year or within the last year, with other ministers across the country — "We're going to do something about this." OK. All I'm suggesting is, rather than rhetoric, it's time to do something about it.

1750

There has been the suggestion that we have gas-busters out there, this commission, I think it's called, that looks after gathering evidence on gas prices that go up. We all see the gas prices go up. Frankly, I don't think four members of the provincial Parliament going around the weekend before with their Polaroids have a darn thing to do with it. I think that's simply rhetoric and I think we're all trying to fool the gasoline purchasers of the province of Ontario.

In fact, the minister was reported to have said Saturday morning on CBC that the reason gas prices went up was that the gas-busters were not out. If we're going to depend on gas-busters in this province to keep gasoline prices down, then I suggest we don't need the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations and his high salary. The point is that it was only last May I believe that the gas-busters proposed that they had some effect. Well, they didn't. Prices went up prior to the gas-busters going out. If the consumers of Ontario were bilked, then they got bilked before the gas-busters went out.

So that we don't just put this solely on the shoulders of the federal government, I will agree that there is a Consumer Protection Act and if the minister has evidence, because he and the Premier have suggested that the oil companies may be working something out together, then fine, put it on the table and we'll get after the oil companies, if someone with evidence is accusing them of collusion.

But if you don't have that evidence and you aren't prepared to stand up and do what the provinces can do, and that is regulate gasoline prices, because it's definitely without question within the realm of the provinces to regulate gasoline prices, then get on with it. If you don't want to regulate gasoline prices and you can't put

evidence on the table that there's collusion, then please don't stand up and say that you're concerned and you're going to do something about it. Just stand up and say that you're concerned.

I don't know what they mean by bringing the oil companies to heel. The commission is going to meet with the oil companies. The oil companies understand. They know what's going on. The problem is, I don't think this government knows what's going on when they say they're going to do something about it. Please, Minister, or your parliamentary assistant, stand here tonight and give us the solution.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I thank the member for the question. Perhaps we can just put this in context first and I can indicate what has been done. I know the member knows this, but I'm still going to do it for the benefit of people who are watching this.

Previous governments, whether it was under Monte Kwinter, the minister concerned under the Peterson government, or whether it was Marilyn Churley under the Bob Rae government, have tried to somehow come to grips with this and have been pretty well unable to do that. In fact, let me just quote this right now. This is a quote from Monte Kwinter in Hansard from May 27, 1986. It says, "I do not have the power to do that because we," ie, the Liberal government, "in the province do not regulate the prices of fuel." He went on to say the federal Competition Act is where the issue should be dealt with.

I agree that this is where the pressure should be put, with the federal government, the Competition Bureau. I would certainly refer you again to the federal MP from the Pickering area, Dan McTeague, who went out with a group of Liberal MPs in the province to try to get some evidence to put some pressure upon, I suppose, his own government and the Competition Bureau, the federal Liberals. He has certainly taken up the cause, and I applaud him for doing that, but the fact is that he still hasn't had any effect as of yet with his own government. Perhaps the easiest thing to do for the members opposite is pick up the telephone. As their leader referred to the federal Liberals in a scrum the other day, he said they're not exactly identical twins but they're cousins. Perhaps they can call up on the phone and speak to their cousins and convey the message, "Yes, we do want the Competition Bureau to do something."

Last year I went to the provincial ministers' conference, and before we left, we attempted to have some sort of resolution of support for the House to indicate that, yes, we agree as a House, as a province, as all members representing all parts of the province, that we believe there are fluctuations in gas prices and that the proper pressure should be put upon the Competition Bureau to deal with this. Unfortunately for us, we didn't get that resolution. The NDP were supportive of it but the members opposite in the Liberal Party were not. Consequently, we didn't

have that resolution to take as further evidence that we needed to put some pressure at the provincial ministers' conference.

However, having said that, we did go to Saskatchewan, and we attempted, through all the various dynamics of a provincial ministers' conference, I might say — because there are really different interests represented there. You look at Alberta and Saskatchewan, which are in essence oil-producing provinces and have different concerns than we do. Certainly the Atlantic provinces have concerns; Quebec did as well. But we managed to put some pressure upon Mr Manley, who was there. To his credit, Mr Manley did listen, although it appears that his chief of the Competition Bureau, who was there, was very unhappy with the fact that we were able to obtain from Mr Manley his consent to form a committee or a task force made up of all the provinces and the federal government but also consumers.

I believe this is a very important element, because with consumers involved, it's not simply government trying to have things on the committee; you have to be more transparent. You have to be more accountable when you actually have consumers involved with the process. That was created and is reporting back next month to the provincial ministers' conference again. I think it's very important for us to look at that.

The member made reference to the consumer watchdog committee; they have been known as the gas-busters in the province. They're providing information to us to take to the provincial ministers' conference. Of course, we know that this task force is being chaired by my parliamentary assistant, Lillian Ross. We are also ably represented on this committee by Dan Newman, Doug Rollins of Quinte, Gary Leadston, Ted Chudleigh and Joe Tascona, so there are six members, not four.

I will say this, and this is what I did say, to get the quote properly quoted: "Isn't it funny, or is it just coincidental, that the only long weekend that the gas-busters did not go out, did not try to educate the gas companies as to what's going to happen and monitor it, isn't it coincidental that the gas prices went up?" That's certainly what I did say.

But what's going to happen is that later on this week this committee is meeting with members of the Canadian petroleum industry, certainly to indicate their pleasure with the fact that there were huge fluctuations in gas prices in the province. We all know this is unacceptable. It is unwarranted to have such huge hikes in gas prices, and that's why we're going to take further action at the provincial ministers' conference.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock tonight.

The House adjourned at 1759.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

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Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

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Oriole	Caplan, David (L)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
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Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Windsor-Riverside	Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
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St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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de l'Ontario
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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 13 October 1998

Mardi 13 octobre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 13 October 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 13 octobre 1998

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER AND LOBBYISTS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 CONCERNANT LE COMMISSAIRE À L'INTÉGRITÉ ET LES LOBBYISTES

Mr Grimm, on behalf of Mr Hodgson, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act to amend the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 and to enact the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998 /
Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur
l'intégrité des députés et édictant la Loi de 1998 sur
l'enregistrement des lobbyistes.

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I am pleased to begin my remarks by saying that I looked up the definition of "lobbying" today, because I wasn't really certain how the term had evolved. As some of my colleagues pointed out to me, I should have known. The House dictionary, which is just behind you, Madam Speaker — it's an old, beaten 1960 dictionary — indicates that "lobbying" actually evolved from the definition of "lobby," which is an ante-room or a vestibule or a corridor, and lobbyists are people who are often seen in the legislative lobby or chamber, especially to influence the members. I think that's a fairly straightforward and simple definition of the kind of individuals we're trying to regulate with this proposed legislation.

We're trying to set up a register where people who are paid to influence government and to try to influence government decision-making are, through a process, voluntarily identifying not only who they are but also who they're working for and what kinds of activities they're engaging in in their relationship with the government of the day. This legislation is fairly straightforward. It's not a really lengthy bill. In many ways it is modelled after the legislation at the federal level. The federal government has had lobby registration legislation in place for several years, and in the remarks I make tonight you will note that there is great similarity with the federal legislation, which I'm sure you're very familiar with, Madam Speaker.

I thought I would begin by mentioning how the legislation identifies who has to register. The object of the

legislation is to set up a register and to identify to the public, and especially to those people who have a lot of activity with the government, when and how they are to become part of the registration process. For people who are engaged in lobbying or who are thinking of doing so and are watching tonight, I'll try to provide a basic run-down on just which ones of them should be registering and how they would go about doing that if this legislation gets the approval of the House.

The first part of the definitions I thought I'd deal with is to identify what kind of activity would fall under the category of lobbying. Lobbying, under the legislation, is a communication between a paid lobbyist — so we're not talking about volunteer lobbyists here; we're talking about people who make a living trying to influence government — and a public office holder to influence government decisions about legislative proposals, bills, regulations, changes to policies and programs, the awarding of grants, contributions, other financial benefits and anything involving privatization of government activity.

If the person is a lobbyist, if they are in fact paid to influence government, who would they talk to who would make them be required to register? A public office holder is the party identified in the legislation. A public office holder, under this proposed legislation, under Bill 69, is anyone occupying a position in the provincial government, including cabinet ministers, members of the provincial Parliament and the staff of cabinet ministers and members of the provincial Parliament. It also includes appointees and employees of ministries, agencies, boards and commissions of the provincial crown. Public office holders do not include legislative officers, such as the table officers, or judges. That quite clearly identifies the people these lobbyists would be interacting with, and that helps them know when they would or would not have to register.

Then the legislation deals with the different types of lobbyists that exist. They are dealt with somewhat differently. Again, this has been modelled quite closely to the federal legislation, which I think most people agree is working quite well.

The first category of lobbyists I thought I'd talk about are the consultant lobbyists. These are people who are retained by a client. They're usually part of a larger organization, but they would be retained by a client specifically to lobby a public office holder on a specific matter. These people would have to register, under the legislation, in a public register as soon as they begin lobbying on behalf of a client. When the information they've put into the register changes, they would have to

again make an entry into the register; and when their lobbying activity is completed or their undertaking to their client is completed, they would then have to make a final entry in the register so the public is aware of what kind of activity they took part in, what their goal was and what happened to complete the process.

The second group of lobbyists identified in the legislation are in-house lobbyists employed by commercial organizations. Those commercial organizations could be corporations or partnerships. These people are employees of such an organization who, as a significant part of their duties, lobby for their employer. The employer is an entity that carries out commercial activities for financial gain, and these employees would have to register when they begin to lobby for their employer and every year thereafter. It's done on an annual basis. Again, they have to report any changes to the information they initially registered, as to the type of activity they're engaging in and the object of it, and if they cease their lobbying activity with that part of the government or that individual, then that would have to be reported in the register.

This goes on on a daily basis at the federal level now, and the federal government has found that about 94% of the registration is done through the Internet service available for registration. This allows the lobbyists to make the entries from the comfort of their office and also saves on time that public employees might spend assisting in the registration. The federal experience seems to be working well, and the proposed legislation we're discussing this evening would allow for that kind of electronic registration to be put in place if the provincial government receives the approval of the House and proceeds with this legislation.

The third type of lobbyist identified in the legislation is an in-house lobbyist employed by non-commercial organizations. These associations would include such organizations as the chamber of commerce, a community-based organization, an advocacy group. These are organizations that we often see in the Legislature. For the purposes of this act, these are not-for-profit organizations where the collective time spent by one or more employees devoted to lobbying amounts to the equivalent of a significant part of one employee's duties. If that's the case, if in fact this organization is engaged in lobbying to that degree, the senior officer of the organization has to register when the organization begins to lobby, and then they must register again every six months.

You can see there are three significant criteria here, and the level of time and effort that must be made by each of those is commensurate with the type of lobbyist they are. This again is similar to the federal legislation, which appears to be working quite well, keeping the public informed on what lobbyist activity is taking place. That's really what the object of the exercise is: to let the public know just what lobbying activity is taking place, why people are at the Legislature, what their purpose is and who they're dealing with.

As to the type of information that the legislation sees being disclosed on the register, aside from the lobbyist's

name and address, they're also going to identify their client; they're going to identify whom they're there representing. They will also describe the specific legislative proposals or bills or policies that they're trying to influence or deal with. They will identify the names of the provincial ministries, agencies, boards, commissions etc that they're attempting to lobby, and the source and amount of government funding received by the lobbyist's client or employer in this activity. They will identify the communication techniques that they're using, including grassroots communication, and they will identify the corporation and organization, and describe the business and activity that it is involved in.

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They will also be required to report when they are communicating with public office holders in an attempt to influence the awarding of a contract by or on behalf of the crown and every time that they're arranging a meeting between a public office holder and any other person. I'm told that at the federal level that means as many as 700 registrations a year. Typically there is a lot of activity going on arranging meetings and that's the kind of activity that this bill is meant to address, to make sure that if you are arranging a meeting between a public office holder and any other person, that activity is identified.

There are heavy penalties in the bill for non-compliance — up to \$25,000 in fines for failing to register or for making false or misleading statements — and an interesting one: People required to register under this act must be very careful and cognizant to not place a public office holder in a position of real or potential conflict of interest. The onus is placed upon the lobbyists to avoid that happening, and I'm sure there are many who welcome that particular section in the act and I'm sure that will be discussed again later this evening.

Currently, the federal government has set up this register both on a manual method, where people will go to a government office and provide the information and fill it out either longhand or in typewritten fashion, or they can use the Web site. The Web site that the federal government has used and that I'm told the provincial government would like to use as a guideline if this legislation is approved enables the lobbyists to file or terminate their registrations electronically, and of course it also provides the public with an on-line access to a database of approved registrations to search and view.

Organizations or individuals that are interested in finding out what kind of lobbying activity goes on — I'm sure members of the media would have some interest in this as well as constituents and members of the general public — are able to access that information from the federal system by simply going on-line. I know that is going to be of interest to the members and also of interest to the members of the media.

One final thing I thought I would speak about is the opportunity that this legislation provides for us to identify just what kind of lobbying activity is taking place. I noticed in reading an article in the *Globe and Mail* that the Cairns Group and MacDonald and Co, two firms based in

Toronto that specialize in government relations, did a survey recently of some of the major trade associations and major companies about their lobbying activities. A surprising result they found: "For all the time and money invested in building relationships and communicating with governments, it does not appear that survey participants are overjoyed with their success," concludes the survey of 74 major companies and trade associations."

The article is by Richard Mackie. It was in the July 18 *Globe and Mail*, and Mr Mackie goes on to say, "The survey comes as the Ontario government is preparing legislation for the fall that would set up a registry for lobbyists similar to a program that already exists at the federal level." I think the timing of this legislation is appropriate in that there is much more observation going on now about just what lobbyists do in the government process and what kind of influence they have.

I also noted in reading through some of the material from the media that there is already legislation in several US states and at the federal level in the United States. I think the challenge for us is to make sure that this legislation prevents what has happened in some of the American jurisdictions where lobbying certainly is more successful than this survey finds it is in a Canadian context.

I think with those remarks I'll pass on the debate to my colleague.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's a pleasure to be able to follow in with the debate on Bill 69. The Lobbyists Registration Act is new, it's different for Ontario, although we have had some experience of it with the federal government, and if we look over the border to the south, we'll see quite a bit of activity on this type of legislation.

Really the whole principle of the legislation we're bringing in is about disclosure, not about control or real strict regulations on what they do or how they do but rather disclosure of what they are doing. Lobbying legislation, as you look around the world, can be divided into two categories: legislation that provides for disclosure of information and legislation that sets out regulation regulating what the lobbyists do.

There's no question in Ontario I believe the public do have the right to know and therefore disclosure is very important to our public. Those in office need to know who they're being lobbied by, and through registration they would be so informed. It's also important for interest groups to know what is going on to ensure that their contribution is indeed being heard.

As we look at some of the background of lobbyist legislation, it's certainly nothing new. It's something that has been around for some time, even if you go back to the first of the Pharaohs. When they were going out to get bids for contracts to build their pyramids, lobbyists were present at that time. It is indeed, since then and up until now, a prominent feature of modern-day politics. It's here to stay. Whether it's something we like or something we don't like, it is indeed here.

It's estimated that in Canada some 450 lobbying companies or firms are present and they bill approximately

\$100 million to \$200 million every year to their respective clients. It's recorded in Ottawa that there are some 2,700 lobbyists and they work with industrial associations, law firms and government relations firms.

The whole industry is about influencing government decisions. At first that may sound as if, "Oh, isn't it terrible that people are out there trying to twist and turn and manoeuvre things," when in fact what they're doing is putting forth the best point of view of the organization that's paying their salaries. They're showing one side and in party politics we hear that information on one side on a regular basis, and as government we have to sort out what is best for the people of Ontario.

Certainly we live in a very complex time and we're talking here about paid lobbyists, not those who volunteer or those who are doing it on an unpaid basis. When you first think in terms of lobbyists, there's an awful lot of lobbying carried out outside of paid lobbyists. It happens every day in my office and every other office of the 129 members in this House. People come to you, your constituents come to you with concerns and they are in essence lobbying whether it be for school buses or whether it be for something different in property tax. They have their concerns and they're putting their best foot forward. In this case we're talking about those who are being paid by organizations to do that for them.

There is a need for this legislation. Just as a note to begin with, there are conflict-of-interest standards that we brought in in December 1997, tough new rules for political staff leaving public service and going to the private sector. As I understand, no other government before has acted to prevent the public servants from sort of going through a revolving door to a secure position with lobbying firms.

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We recognize, certainly, that it's not appropriate for public servants to develop expertise or the type of contacts that can be developed on the public payroll and then exert influence over former colleagues. It's sort of like creating a permanent ruling class. It couldn't go unchecked, as under previous governments. It contributed to poor image for politics, poor image for lobbyists and poor image for politicians.

When we talk about lobbyists and some of the things that have happened in the past, every time you mention a name like Patti Starr, the Liberals sit up and get pretty paranoid over the whole thing. But I have read the story about Patti Starr, and I think it's a very unfortunate circumstance that woman found herself in. With this legislation in place, that kind of a mess probably would not have occurred.

We have also extended the integrity legislation to lobbying firms. This government is committed to operating in an open, accessible and accountable manner. The new legislation will define lobbying in three categories: consultant lobbyists, in-house lobbyists for persons and in-house lobbyists for organizations. It will require firms to register in the lobbyist registry, which is going to be open to the public, it will require lobbyists to register their

lobbyist activities and it will require lobbyists to disclose who their employer is.

Ontario will be the first province to have a lobbyist registration law. Canada, along with 37 US states and the federal US government, has lobbyist registration laws already. The legislation we are proposing is similar to the federal legislation, which was first brought in by a Conservative government in 1988 and was later upgraded by a Liberal government.

It's instructive to look for a moment at the US experience. Just in the last three years, 35 of those states have reformed their legislative ethics and lobbying laws. As with these proposed laws, they have created independent commissions to oversee lobbyists and to enforce lobbying laws. The US states encourage voluntary codes of ethics, they promote training and development and voluntary certification programs. This is something we might also look at, that we require lobbyists hired by companies to sign a code of professional conduct.

There's no question that lobbying firms want tough rules. They support the disclosure rules, and they're eager to demystify their work. Generally they're very respectable people doing a job that's quite important to the democratic process. They see reporting and making it open as a way to dispel this image of stealthy influence peddling that seems to have been there in the past, as the previous member speaking commented, where the name "lobbyist" came from people who hung around the lobbies to lobby with politicians to be able to influence them into their kind of thinking.

In 1993, in the standing committee on consumer and corporate relations, the lobbyists were anxious to get rid of this influence-peddling, lurking type of image that was unfair and wrong-headed, and they were pushing very hard in those committee hearings to get on with this upgraded legislation.

Certainly lobbyists are a crucial link between legislators and interest groups, providing information that flows both ways. With this legislation, there will be tough new rules which will help to weed out some of the bad apples which have given the lobbyist profession a rather sleazy image in the past. We want to get rid of that.

In moving forward with new legislation, you will recall that on April 23, 1997, the Honourable Dave Johnson, who was Chair of Management Board at the time, announced the introduction of the lobbyist registration law, and he indicated at that time that our government planned to introduce it in the not-too-distant future. It would establish a public registry modelled after the federal registry coming under Industry Canada. It would require lobbyists to enrol in the proposed registry, make it available to the public for review and require all firms and individuals paid by lobby groups for the government to ensure that they are registered. I'm very pleased that Minister Hodgson is moving forward with his earlier commitment.

In conclusion, there is no question that lobbying is here to stay. Even the harshest critics of lobbyists also recognize that lobbying is here to stay as a profession. Both the

past federal governments, the PCs and the Liberals, enacted legislation to improve accountability for both the lobbyists and the legislators. The Lobbyists Registration Act, introduced first by the PC government, and later strengthened by the Liberal government, accepts lobbying as a legitimate function and provides information for lobbyists that is publicly available.

All lobbyists who appeared before various parliamentary committees endorsed the principle of disclosure. They recognize that in the system of representative government the most important thing is the highest trust in both the government officials and government employers. The public have a right to be assured of impartiality, integrity and independent judgment of employees and government officials. This is necessary and wise legislation for Ontario, once again forging new trails and establishing new standards for accountability in government.

For these reasons, I am very pleased to be able to support Bill 69, An Act to amend the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 and to enact the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998, as it will bring disclosure and improved integrity to lobbyists and to politicians.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I'm very pleased to join the debate on the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998. I think the bill is long overdue. It's something the federal government already has. It brings openness to government, and it brings transparency in the process with respect to who's trying to influence government policy and other things that would be involved in the government process, so I'm in support of this legislation.

The legislation involves the mandatory registration of lobbyists and supports the government's commitment to ensure government activities are conducted openly, fairly and transparently. This legislation would require lobbyists to register their identity, the names of their clients and to declare their lobbying activities on a government registry for the public record. The lobbyist registration would be accessible to the public on a government Web site.

Not only are we the first Ontario government taking action to ensure that taxpayers' interests are protected; we are also the first provincial government across Canada to take this step. That's a very fundamental step in open, honest and fair government.

A mandatory registration process for lobbyists will allow the public to know who is being paid, and by whom, to influence government decision-making. Lobbyists would disclose information such as the lobbyist's name and address; the client's or employer's name and address; a description of specific legislative proposals, bills, regulations, policies, programs, grants, contributions or contracts sought; the names of the provincial ministries, agencies, boards and commissions that are being lobbied; the source and amount of government funding received by the lobbyist's client and employer; communications techniques used, including grassroots communications. Corporations and organizations must also file information describing their business and activities.

In the legislation, there's a specific definition with respect to what "lobbying" means, and I think that's

something the public should understand as part of understanding this bill and how far-reaching the government is taking its commitment to open, honest and transparent government in this day and age.

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The term "lobby" means "in relation to a consultant lobbyist...and an in-house lobbyist...to communicate with a public office holder in an attempt to influence,

"(i) the development of any legislative proposal by the government of Ontario or by a member of the Legislative Assembly,

"(ii) the introduction of any bill or resolution in the Legislative Assembly or the passage, defeat or amendment of any bill or resolution that is before the Legislative Assembly,

"(iii) the making or amendment of any regulation as defined in section 1 of the Regulations Act,

"(iv) the development or amendment of any policy or program of the government of Ontario or the termination of any program of the government of Ontario,

"(v) a decision by the executive council to transfer from the crown for consideration all or part of, or any interest in or asset of, any business, enterprise or institution that provides goods or services to the crown or to the public,

"(vi) a decision by the executive council, a committee of the executive council or a minister of the crown to have the private sector instead of the crown provide goods or services to the crown,

"(vii) the awarding of any grant, contribution or other financial benefit by or on behalf of the crown, and

"(b) in relation to a consultant lobbyist...,

"(i) to communicate with a public office holder in an attempt to influence the awarding of any contract by or on behalf of the crown."

A "public office holder" is defined in the legislation to include a member of the Legislative Assembly or their staff; also, a consultant lobbyist "to arrange a meeting between a public office holder and any other person." If the consultant lobbyist is trying to deal with an MPP, to have them influence the rewarding of any contract by or on behalf of the crown or to arrange a meeting between an MPP and any other person, that is certainly covered by his legislation.

The legislation also specifically defines the organizations that it is meant to cover in terms of these lobbying activities. They include:

"(a) a business, trade, industry, professional or voluntary organization,

"(b) a trade union or labour organization,

"(c) a chamber of commerce or board of trade,

"(d) an association, a charitable organization, a coalition or an interest group,

"(e) a government, other than the government of Ontario, and

"(f) a corporation without share capital incorporated to pursue, without financial gain to its members, objects of a national, provincial, territorial, patriotic, religious, philanthropic, charitable, educational, agricultural, scientific,

artistic, social, professional, fraternal, sporting or athletic character or other similar objects."

Those are the organizations that the bill is intended to cover, and I think obviously for the purposes of this exercise its focus in the public's mind is in terms of who lobbies out there: businesses and of course trade unions are involved in lobbying to try to influence government policy.

The objective here is to ensure greater transparency. Consultant lobbyists will also, as I said, be required to report when they are communicating with public office holders who are MPPs, "in an attempt to influence the awarding of a contract by or on behalf of the crown" and when they are arranging a meeting between an MPP and any other person, for example.

There are provisions in the bill for fines of up to \$25,000 for violations of (1) failing to register; (2) making false or misleading statements; (3) knowingly placing a public office holder in a position of real or potential conflict of interest. These fines are consistent with those imposed for similar violations of other Ontario statutes.

The bill will provide a lobbying registrar with authority for (1) administering the lobbyist registration process; (2) requesting clarification of information on a registration form or other document submitted; (3) identifying omissions and inconsistencies and communicating with the lobbyist to ensure correction or requesting supplementary information; (4) providing advice and information about the proposed registration system to lobbyists, public office holders, general public and other groups, for example, the media; (5) submitting annual reports to the minister for tabling in the Legislative Assembly about this activity; (6) ensuring public accessibility to the information contained in the lobbyist registry.

The concept of openness underlines this legislation. All information registered with the government becomes part of the public record. This information will be posted on a lobbyist registry Web site, as I previously noted. The Web site will (1) enable lobbyists to file, renew or terminate their registration electronically; (2) provide the public with on-line access to a database of approved registrations to search and view; and (3) include reference sources for lobbyists and the public, such as a full text of the Lobbyists Registration Act, regulations, interpretation of both and other communications.

Lobbyists who do not have access to the Internet will be able to file paper forms with the government. Not only are we the first Ontario government taking action to ensure that the taxpayers' interests are protected, we are also the first provincial government across Canada to take this step, and I'd say this is another example of this government leading the way in policy development across the country.

The government is following through on its commitment to establish procedures to register all persons and firms who lobby the government. The legislation enshrines four basic principles: (1) the importance of open access to the government; (2) the legitimacy of lobbying; (3) the need for public awareness of influences on government;

and (4) that registration procedures should not impede access to public office holders.

The government has fulfilled its promise and has taken action to protect the public's interest. Introduction of this legislation is the government's commitment to conducting government business in a manner that ensures accountability to the taxpayers of this province.

I think it's long overdue that a government has the confidence and the maturity level to come out to the public and say that we believe in open, fair and transparent government because we want to be accountable to the people in regard to what happens with respect to how government policy, for example, is shaped and the lobbying that goes on.

A lot of the public doesn't understand what happens with respect to the shaping of government legislation, the shaping of government policy, what happens to different programs, why they are introduced, why they disappear. I think the public has to know what type of activity there is with respect to the influences on government by having a public registry, a public record of who is involved in this type of activity.

For example, trade unions would be a part of that public registry, businesses that are involved, and the public will want to know what kind of issues they're getting involved in. I think it's very important for them to know when they see issues that are hotly debated, hotly presented in the press, who may be interested in this and who would be involved in trying to influence public opinion, because that's part of the process.

We've seen that activity being heavily involved with respect to trade unions where they're not in favour of anything that would affect the status quo of their memberships and the *raison d'être* for what they're trying to accomplish. The public has to be aware of that when they see third parties getting involved in the process and trying to shape their public opinion and they're doing it for one specific reason only, and that's because they want to shape public policy.

But that's something that is more of an upfront nature in terms of when we see advertisements by particular groups that want to put forth their own positions. That's up front, that's transparent, that's open, that's honest, that's fair. What we're talking about is behind the scenes, where they're actually doing this not in front of the media, not out in the public, but they basically have taken the position, "We want to be involved in this process," and in fact they are lobbying MPPs, different ministry officials etc.

1910

The public has a right to know, through the public record, who is involved in this type of activity. The public record is important, as I said, to deal with these four basic principles, because everyone agrees that registration for lobbyists is needed. There should probably be consensus on that.

What we want the public to be aware of is the importance of open access to government; the legitimacy of lobbying; the need for public awareness of influences on

government; and that registration procedures should not impede access to public officer holders.

The registration process is mandatory. There are fines that have been put in place, similar to other provincial legislation, to deal with specific offences for those who are involved in the activity and have not followed through in terms of the mandatory requirements.

It's very important for everybody to know what the rules are — the public who want to know how the government is operating and how the government is being influenced; from that category, how their MPPs are conducting themselves in the House in terms of who has been lobbying them on particular issues. That's something the public wants to know: who's influencing their member. That's something about open, honest and transparent government that the public has a right to know.

I'd just like to indicate, as I have previously, that I support this type of approach by this government. This is the only provincial government that is doing this in the country. This is the first provincial government in Ontario's history that has come forth with this piece of legislation, and I think it should be supported.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I'm certainly delighted to continue on in the consideration of Bill 69, dealing with the registration of lobbyists.

The whole lobbying industry in Ontario has become very significant in the determination of public policy issues, the outcome of those public policy issues. My colleagues the previous speakers have outlined fairly well the content of the bill, how it will play out, what players are involved and what kinds of rules lobbyists must register under so that there is a very strong disclosure element in public policy-making today.

Up until this point in time, we haven't seen registration of lobbyists in this country, except federally. If you look at the United States, Washington, DC, is probably the haven of the lobby industry. There are estimated to be over 100,000 people involved in the industry in Washington, DC, alone. Imagine what it's like out in some of the bigger states. So you can see that the way in which public policy is getting shaped across North America has required the introduction of this particular bill.

Rather than go into the details of the bill, I would like to outline what, in my estimation, are the forces which are leading up to the necessity and urgency of setting up a lobbying registration process.

I'll start out by noting that in public policy-making today, probably more so in the United States than Canada, the role of political parties in agenda-making, in policy development, isn't as sharp as it used to be, because if you look at some of the political parties in the western world, there are very few that take the specific recommendations at a policy convention and implement them one by one. That has occurred with us to a great extent through the Common Sense Revolution, but it was done outside the political party policy-making process to a great extent. So there is a decline in the role of policy-making by political parties throughout the western world.

Secondly, I think we have seen in this particular province, and in others across Canada, a great deal of voter volatility because people have assumed, unfortunately, a great degree of cynicism in the public mind about how policy is made by government, whatever the political stripe of that government. There is a certain skepticism that the voter brings to his or her mind. How are you shaping public policy, whatever the issue is: health care, education, gun control, the Regulated Health Professions Act, the transportation industry.

I think that explains to a certain extent a second reason for the rationale in requiring the registration of lobbyists. People want to see more open and, as previous speakers alluded to, transparent government, more accountable government. When you look at the content of the legislation, it outlines how we are going to create that equation of greater public confidence and trust in the public policy-making process of this great province.

Specifically, I wanted to reference within the bill, as the great member for Simcoe Centre noted, that when a lobbyist registers his or her business and they set out the content of what they are registering, what the public policy issue is, with the lobbyist registrar, in section 12, under the registrar and registry section it clearly states, "The registrar may verify the information contained in any act, any return or other document submitted to the registrar under this act."

It also goes on to outline the certification of that information, the validity of it, so that when voters look at the Web site or look at the paper records they know what they see is actually true, fair, valid and consistent, and that all adds up in the equation of greater governmental and political accountability, which we all have to reach in today's very sophisticated world of public policy-making.

This leads me to the third reason for the rationale, the motivation of this particular piece of legislation, and that deals with the point that public policy has become increasingly more complex and sophisticated because of the interrelationships of issues, whether it be in transportation, health care or education. There is a greater strategic linkage between many of these issues, and I have personally seen that in dealing with many of the issues which have come before the Red Tape Commission.

Good examples of that particular interplay of public policy issues involve the you-brew industry and the brewing industry in terms of new rules that they wanted to see, not only by the players in the you-brew industry but by the larger brewing interests in this province, because of the increasing competition, part of the market that the you-brew industry was taking. It's an interesting flip on what you see in government relations people or the associations coming to us asking for specific deregulation of their industry. Here was an example of where they wanted some clearer, more certain rules in terms of the you-brew issue and its health care concerns.

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So it is with this particular bill. The lobbying or government relations industry itself has been asking for many years in this province for clearer rules on how they go

about doing business. They want to see a demystification of what they do because they are labelled, to some extent unfairly, by ourselves, by the media, by the public, that somehow or other public policy is being made behind closed doors, when in point of fact that's not the point at all. That's not the reality. There is an interplay of those interests, whatever the issue is, with whatever the particular viewpoint that that minister and ministry have on a public policy issue. I think that is another key reason why we have a very prominent role today of the government relations industry not only federally, not only in the United States but within Ontario.

This leads me to the fourth point, and that is, when you have so much competition for scarce resources in public policy, whether they be regulatory or monetary, you're going to see a greater interchange of communications between the players, the public policy-makers, the interest groups, whether they be teacher federations, labour unions, business associations or not-for-profits, with the viewpoint presented by the bureaucracy, with the viewpoint presented by party members whether they be the party in power or a party in opposition. There is a great interplay among all these groups, given a public policy issue. When you have scarcer resources and an environment of no tax increases — people certainly today do not want to see their taxes increased across the board in any area — then that creates a greater necessity for the lobbying or government relations people to make sure that their viewpoint is heard at Queen's Park.

Finally, it's important not only to outline some of the factors which have led up to this bill, but to point out that this government has taken action on this particular issue. Much as it's probably a low-visibility issue, it is a key issue in terms of how governmental business is carried on, whether it be in Ottawa or at Queen's Park. I specifically would like to outline and point out that there was an editorial recently in the London Free Press which outlined very clearly the need for registering lobbyists.

It says, "It is not an issue that grabs headlines or seizes the imagination of voters, but it can be integral to ensuring integrity in government," and I think that's the key fundamental viewpoint here, the word "integrity," because you will find that word in the Members' Integrity Act, under which this registrar will function when it gets up and going, probably early in 1999.

I think also that this particular bill will enhance over time greater public or voter confidence in government business, whether it be on contracts, where we have a pretty good record across this country, in this province, in the way in which things are tendered, in the way in which we have requests for proposals, whether they be for facilities or the supply of services. This particular legislation will shed even greater light on that sort of a hidden world in terms of those particular issues.

Referring back to the editorial in the London Free Press, it states very clearly, and I think it's important to hear from our members opposite why they didn't do this when they were in government, "This idea has been

discussed provincially for about 20 years." I think that's rather important.

Mr Alex Cullen (Ottawa West): Who was in power 20 years ago?

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for Ottawa West, come to order.

Mr Hastings: In terms of the members opposite, it will be interesting to hear what their rationale will be for not having dealt with this issue over that time frame of three governments: PC, Liberal and NDP. This is not a partisan issue, as the member from Ottawa may want to point out. It is particularly in the broader context that the issue wasn't dealt with, and here we are.

I think we deserve some credit for bringing the whole subject forward, because I've heard for over three years in this House from the members opposite, "You're going too fast." Here is a particular issue that we haven't gone fast on, so I don't think they can use both sides of the issue. I would like to hear from them whether they have any specific amendments to make improving this particular legislation and how they would do so. That's what I look forward to hearing as we look at the finer details of this piece of legislation.

Finally, let me conclude. This particular bill will once and for all outline a way in which government becomes more open, more disclosing of the business of government, whether it be on the regulatory, monetary side, how public policy issues get influenced by the interest groups and what their particular position will be, because up till now they haven't had to register the information.

It's going to have a very positive impact in terms of how a particular lobbying interest, particularly the not-for-profits and business associations, presents their issues, because in doing so they are going to have to communicate very clearly. They're going to have to look at a greater sense of public interest themselves, rather than the particular interest they represent from their membership, whether it be the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Canadian Bar Association, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, the food and commercial workers, probably arts associations, what have you. They're going to have to look out among whole sections of the public rather than just playing to their own particular interests. That's going to have a very major, positive impact on the way in which they present the information and also how they format it, because it will lead in the longer term, if not the medium term, to a more positive environment of people discussing issues.

I'm very hopeful that over the long term it will reduce some of the cynicism we have out among the voters when they see how the public issues are presented by these interest groups. That is going to be one of the key benefits that is very intangible but will have a very productive and beneficial long-term interest in terms of creating a very healthy discourse on public policy and all the issues that make up public policy in this province.

I am very glad to support this legislation. I think it's not only essential and significant, but it will make government more transparent, more open, more disclosing and

particularly more accountable, leading to greater voter confidence and trust in us as representatives of a representative parliamentary system. I'm glad to have had this opportunity to make our views known on this subject.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? Member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I wanted to hear the member for Ottawa West.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): You will.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean, order, please.

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Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): You'll have a chance to hear from the member for Ottawa West, but I'd like to say, coming from Ottawa Centre, which is the heart of one of the most active sort of lobbyist fervours that one might see with the federal government, the need for this kind of legislation is quite apparent.

To my colleague across the way, I'd say, first of all, that this is a good bill. Are there some suggestions that we have on this side? Yes, there are a couple we would look at, and my colleague the member for Ottawa West will address this, and perhaps my colleague the member for Renfrew North as well, in terms of the Integrity Commissioner and the role of that, which will be dealt with, the nature of regulations and what this might exempt, whom it might exempt, on what basis and whether it's as transparent as it might be. We have those suggestions.

Perhaps not since the Irish heritage bill was in the House did we have as strong a degree of consensus around both the need and the manner in which we can go about having people register for the purposes to which they are approaching government. I applaud the initiative. I believe it is a good one. It is long overdue.

Other governments have other schedules of dealing with their legislation, but in this particular case I believe we would look forward to a much easier time of debate and discussion than on other bills such as the closing of schools or the —

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I came into the Legislature tonight intending originally a sort of blind support of this legislation. It's supposed to be lobbyist registration legislation and I think on the surface we all support that as far as making sure the business of the government is done in an open way is concerned so that everybody knows what's going on. But as I listened to the debate I started reading the legislation in a little bit more detail and I started looking at it, and I'm really wondering what exactly the government is trying to get at with this legislation.

As I said early on in my first part of the comment, I don't disagree generally, but I look at this and I say they want on the one hand to make it so that people have to register — and I'm just looking at the information — if somebody is trying to obtain government financing or assistance of some type for a project that they happen to be building. For example, there's a contract out to build a

highway; it's millions of dollars. The lobbyists and the firms trying to get that money would have to register. I think I agree with that. I don't have a problem with that.

Then I look at other parts where we say we want to register lobbyists who are out there doing their job from non-profit housing corporations, from the chambers of commerce, from unions, from the independent business federation, because they would somehow have influence over the government when it comes to government policy.

This government doesn't listen to anybody, so why would this even be an issue? We've seen through the megacity debates, we've seen through everybody's debates, they don't even listen to their back bench. And they're worried about outside lobbyists coming out and having influence on this government? I wonder. I also predict that this bill's going to get lots of time at committee. It'll travel through the province. Unlike the Hydro bill and a whole bunch of other bills that are really important, this government's going to run it through the committee process and they're going to make sure that if you're living in Peawanuck or if you're living in downtown Ottawa, you'll have a chance to comment on this, but you won't have a chance to comment on very important public business that the government doesn't seem to want to listen to anybody on.

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I'm pleased to have this opportunity to comment on the remarks of my colleagues from Muskoka-Georgian Bay, Northumberland, Simcoe Centre and Etobicoke-Rexdale on the subject of Bill 69.

I think it's highly appropriate that the parliamentary assistant for the Chair of Management Board, the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay, led off the discussion this evening inasmuch as this bill is named after one of the more important highways in his riding.

I was interested, as always, in the remarks of the member for Northumberland who, although he was not quite as colourful this evening as he is customarily, did add to his speaking time in this House in the ongoing derby with the member for Durham East. I'm not sure who is the Sammy Sosa and who is the Mark McGwire of that duo, but the member for Northumberland did add to his speaking time tonight most admirably, and in his remarks he covered quite a great deal of history, beginning with the time of the Pharaohs and bringing us up to the present day.

The member for Simcoe Centre of course really hit the essence of the bill when he stressed the concept of transparency, which of course is what this bill is all about — who is getting paid and who is doing the paying. That's essentially what this bill is for. Whereas the member for Northumberland was less colourful than usual, I do, however, compliment the member for Simcoe Centre on his very nice jacket.

The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, as always, spoke with great passion and with great conviction this evening, and I think he touched on the key issues of disclosure, accountability, trust, openness and confidence in the system. He did speak at great length on the political process

and the role of lobbyists in the political process and the importance of this bill in that process.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further comments and questions? The member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: The people in the agricultural area would use this analogy. They would say that several of the horses were out of the barn before they finally brought this legislation in. In other words, several people well connected to the Conservative Party have benefited immensely until the government gets right near an election; then it decides for public relations purposes it must bring in this bill.

I hate to sound so cynical, but many people would think that's realistic. The reason it's a realistic assessment is, I look at what the government did on another bill which is associated with this bill. You will well remember that this government has brought in a piece of legislation, which I'll call companion legislation, which allows political parties to spend far more money than was the case in the past and allows corporate donors to give far more money to political parties than was the case in the past and removes many of the controls over the expenditures of those dollars.

I find it a contradiction — maybe it's conscience I should say — for the government to bring in a bill of this kind because they have opened up this process more and more to the influence of money. What it reminds you of is the United States where money is king or queen, whichever way you want to put it. Money is the top factor in the United States. They brought in this legislation that shortens the campaign time so that television ads are going to be the most important part of a campaign, not the door-to-door knocking, and to bring in legislation of this kind is a bit of conscience legislation. The government recognized how wrong it was to make money the king of the political process and so has brought this legislation in at long last to be debated in this House.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay.

Mr Grimmett: I'm pleased to respond to the remarks. I want to thank the members for Ottawa Centre, Cochrane South, York East and St Catharines for their comments and questions regarding speeches that have been made by the members from our side. The member for Ottawa Centre indicated that his party will have some suggestions on possibly going further with the legislation or things that we might want to look at. I'm looking forward to that debate later on. They'll be speaking right after us.

The member for Cochrane South, I thought, perhaps needs to read the legislation in a little more depth. His concerns are about the type of lobbyists that are being caught by this legislation. Perhaps because he's from the New Democratic Party he had a rather predictable response that the more commercial type of lobbyists are the ones who should be affected by the registry. I think with all due respect that the legislation is modelled after the federal model which —

Mr Bisson: They are Liberals. How can you model anything after them?

Mr Grimmett: The legislation actually at the federal level was brought in by a Conservative government in 1988. It was amended by the Liberal government since then. It not only deals with commercial lobbyists, it deals with all kinds of lobbying. It's in the public interest to know exactly who has access to the decision-makers and just what kind of activity is going on.

Mr Bradley: Just go to a Tory fundraiser and you'll see that.

Mr Grimmett: That's exactly — the member for St Catharines agrees with me on this point. You need to have public disclosure of all of the lobbying activity that's going on. That's really what we're getting at. I would urge the member for Cochrane South to read the parts of the legislation that distinguish between the types of lobbyists because there is also some distinction between what degree of registration particulars those people have to provide. There is a distinction between the commercial and non-commercial organizations.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Ottawa West.

Mr Cullen: I'm pleased to join this debate to discuss the Integrity Commissioner and Lobbyists Statute Law Amendment Act, 1998, Bill 69, which is an act to require the registration of lobbyists. Listening to the debate here it's clear that we do have, in our opinion, a positive first step towards shoring up the integrity of government. We will have some suggestions to make this bill more effective.

But you have to wonder about the timing of this bill. As you know, "Timing is very important in sex, in humour and in politics." I'm quoting Will Rogers; I'm using a very important authority. The point is that here we have legislation that is finally coming to us after four ministerial announcements. After the first announcement was made by this government some two and a half years ago, finally we have lobbyist registration for Ontario. As the member for St Catharines said, "This is nothing more than an attempt to close the barn door after the horses have gone." The only reason that explains this delay is the government's desire to keep lobbying, up to this point, behind closed doors.

Let us remember why this legislation is being introduced. It's being introduced to protect the public interest, to ensure the integrity of the government process, to avoid the culture of preferential treatment on the basis of who you know and how much you're willing to contribute to the governing party. In this particular instance, we have lobbyists who have left the government and who are selling their expertise, their knowledge of who's in power to make what decision. Of course we're talking about such graduates as Bill King, Leslie Noble, George Boddington, Mitch Patten.

Quite frankly, this government has a record, has set a new standard for mixing government business with controlled access and preferential treatment. Indeed, this legislation should have been introduced at the beginning of this government's term, not now close to the end of it. This

legislation should have been in place when the Mike Harris government was privatizing road maintenance contracts, when it was privatizing jails, when it was holding bids for casinos, when it was contracting out office management, when it was closing hospitals.

If we had had this legislation in place, we could have avoided the impropriety that clouded the Niagara casino contract. We would have known that Michael French, who was under contract with this government to advise on how the lucrative casino contracts were going to be awarded, was at the same time on a \$100,000 casino contract for one of the bidders that was rated third and ultimately won the Niagara casino contract. Had this legislation been in place, as promised two and a half years ago, this clear blatant conflict of interest would have been avoided by a responsible government.

We have to understand that lobbying is going on all around us. It's a multi-million dollar business. The purview of government touches automobile manufacturers; the forestry industry; the trucking industry; pharmaceuticals; the insurance industry; developers; brewers and wineries; oil; tobacco, and the list goes on. This is good business for the likes of lobbyist companies such as SAMCI, Murray Research, Policy Perspective, Hill and Knowlton, Government Policy Consultants, Strategy Corp and others. No wonder Tory hacks from the Premier's office have ended up there.

Yet when we look at who is being serviced by this industry we will find those companies who are greatly interested in government policy ranging from the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario; the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association; the Brewers of Ontario; the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario; the Fair Rental Policy Organization, an oxymoron if I ever heard one; the Ontario Forest Industries Association; Ontario Mining Association; Ontario Pharmacists' Association; and even a little hospital, Carleton Place and District Memorial Hospital, requires the services of lobbyists. It is a big business. No wonder those who have set up the policies of this government have moved out now to interpret, if that's the polite word, those policies.

Why do we need this legislation? We heard from the members opposite a number of good reasons: integrity in government, transparency of process. It's important for the public to know not only that lobbying is going on but who is lobbying for whom and with whom or why, so that the public can participate in the process on an equal playing field. Lobbyists who have connections to the political party that forms the government obviously can potentially have more influence over government decision-making than others. We need legislation to ensure that government decisions can never be, or appear to be, purchased by the lobbying process.

Already we know that the public has a very low opinion of government and its process and lobbyists. For some members of the public the suspicion is that lobbyists use personal connections with office holders to obtain special favours from government. This lies at the heart of most of

the cynicism that's around the government process and lobbying.

We are concerned, all of us should be concerned, about the kind of lobbying that goes on, and we know it well. There is the lobbyist who arranges access. We have laws dealing with influence-peddling. We have lobbyists who seek to obtain inside information. Those lobbyists who obtain, on behalf of a client, insider information on pending government policy decisions or regulatory decisions that are not available to the public at large clearly create an unfair advantage for their clients. Such action would create an unlevel playing field, and that is part of the purpose of ensuring that there's regulation for the industry. Then there are lobbyists who have expertise in the area and can provide advice to clients, which indeed the majority of lobbyists are.

We have to make sure that the whole process is above-board. We have to make sure that our policies are in place so that we do not perpetuate the perception of cronyism and backdoor access to government insiders. Unfortunately the lay of this legislation leads one to the conclusion that there is the perception of cronyism and the backdoor access to government insiders.

I want to inform the House, despite the blandishments of the members opposite, that what this government is doing today is not the cutting edge of lobbyist registration. Quite frankly, the government members have acknowledged that this mirrors the federal legislation that was introduced 10 years ago, but you must also look at the broader North American context. Not only have there been laws in place in the US Congress since World War I, but every state in the United States has lobbyist registration. As a matter of fact, most states, over a third of the states, have updated their lobbyist registration to require even more disclosure than what we're seeing here today. I will speak to this point later on.

The fact is that we have to deal with the issue of how to ensure transparency of the process, how to ensure to the taxpayer that there is indeed integrity to the process. In this particular instance we look at the legislation and, yes, the members opposite have commented on how there is a requirement to ensure that all members of industry who deal with government do register with government, and indeed that is a good thing. But there are still some flaws with this legislation.

For instance, there is only a requirement within the legislation to ensure that if you are a lobbyist consultant you must register if you are lobbying on behalf of "any relevant legislative proposal, bill, resolution, regulation, policy, program, decision, grant, contribution, financial benefit or contract," all things that we on this side of the House believe belong in the universe of activities relating to lobbying. That restriction dealing with contracts only deals with consultant lobbyists, the hired gun. But for in-house lobbyists, whether they be for organizations or for persons and partnerships, there is no requirement to register if you're lobbying on behalf of your employer with respect to a contract.

Let's just look at the purview of all this. If Stelco is lobbying for contracts, don't you think the public ought to know that indeed they have someone in-house who's engaging in that activity, whom they are talking to, which ministry they're talking to? I think that's an important omission and something that should be corrected within the act that is being proposed before us.

We also have within this legislation a gaping loophole, a tremendous loophole. If you look at section 18 of the act, this is a new section very unlike what you have in the federal legislation: "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations exempting any person" who may be lobbying. Seeing that you are only required to register if you are lobbying a public office holder, then why in heaven's name would we exempt public office holders, any class thereof, from the requirements of this act?

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You could use this act to exempt, for example, the Ontario Energy Board. Why would you do that? A tremendous public responsibility involving billions of public dollars, yet you could exempt this particular institution from application of the act, which means that any person who lobbied the Ontario Energy Board, which after all sets prices for electricity, would not have to register. This is a glaring omission. In fact, you can even extend it to the Premier's office. It says here, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations...." There is no justification for this.

In the opening comments by the parliamentary assistant to the Chair of Management Board, who has responsibility for the carriage of this bill, he omits any discussion of this very important section or any rationale for this. I am looking forward to the opportunity at committee to deal with this glaring omission, because it needs to be corrected. It will make a mockery of this particular bill if this oversight is not covered.

That's not the only thing that is missing from this bill. The members of the government state with great pleasure that they're copying the federal legislation, yet they don't have in there any code of conduct that would help measure lobbyist activity. The federal bill does, and for good reason. The federal bill has it because of the lobbyist code of conduct which the ethics commissioner, another omission from this bill, has in the federal legislation. That is a public process that the ethics commissioner has in place to develop a lobbyist code of conduct through full public participation involving the lobbyist industry.

That lobbyist code of conduct that the feds have includes the requirement for accurate information, the requirement for disclosure of obligations, the requirement not to divulge confidential information, the requirement not to divulge insider information, the requirement to divulge where there are competing interests, a prohibition against conflict of interest, a requirement to disclose the possibility of conflict of interest and the requirement not to engage in improper influence.

These are things that are important to safeguard the public process. These are things that are important to ensure the integrity of government, yet they are missing

from this bill. If the federal bill, which again is not the cutting edge of legislation in North America, is so good, then why does this government step backwards from those things that would protect the public interest?

I also alluded earlier to the fact that there is nothing in the bill that speaks to the ethics commissioner. I know what the parliamentary secretary is going to say in his comments: "But we've introduced amendments to the Members' Integrity Act to give the Integrity Commissioner the ability to deal with such matters that may arise from the interpretation of the act that would allow the government to say to the Integrity Commissioner, 'Please investigate this.'" I'm sorry, but the ethics commissioner in the federal legislation has the impartial power to engage in that activity when it's in the public interest.

No way should the government, which is the subject of lobbying, be then able to turn to the Integrity Commissioner and say, "We think you should investigate how that lobbyist spoke to us." It's a conflict of interest. Not only is the Integrity Commissioner reporting to a member of cabinet, which is very different from the federal legislation, which allows for an arm's-length relationship, but the activity, which is to investigate the possible impropriety with respect to lobbying, is at the behest of the government. Where is the protection of the public interest? Where is the ability for an independent authority to listen to representations, make a judgment based on the evidence before it and then investigate a violation of the act? That needs to be corrected in this bill. These are some of the technical problems within the bill itself that need redress as we go through the legislative process.

The member for Cochrane South said that we would have an opportunity for this bill to travel and for us to hear from the public. I think it's important to hear from the public in all these matters. Certainly when the federal legislation went through, both in its first incarnation, when the previous government in 1988 produced it — there was a white paper, there was an opportunity for hearings — and indeed when the Chrétien government updated the legislation in 1993, there was again that opportunity for hearings, not only to hear from industry — and, by gum, did the parliamentary committee ever hear from industry, from all the industrial associations and other lobby groups — but they also had a chance to hear from ordinary citizens, because the object of the exercise is to ensure not only that the public's interest is being protected here but that ordinary citizens have the equal opportunity to approach their government as the private interests, the moneyed interests, whose own concerns they are presenting with their own ability to research, to provide documentation, in essence to provide a comprehensive approach to whatever viewpoint they wish the government to listen to.

This is why we need transparency. It's not only to see who's talking to government, for what reason and on behalf of whom, but it is also to allow for a level playing field so that citizens can see that this particular industry is taking this particular tack with the government department and be able to provide a balance to the system so that they

can come forward and say, "Yes, when the automobile industry tells you not to reduce these emissions because this will affect the cost to their industry," there is indeed an ability for ordinary citizens to come forward and say: "But we need to reduce these toxic emissions that are coming out of the automobile industry. We need to protect the environment. There needs to be the appropriate legislation in place to protect environmental health."

Why is it that even today we still do not have the new emissions act that was promised by the Ministry of the Environment almost two years ago? Why is it that we have that problem? Does it have anything to do with the lobbying efforts by the automobile industry? We don't know. Had this legislation been put in place two years ago, we would be able to see the track record of those who speak to government.

It's not because we want to restrict anyone's ability to speak to government, but we understand that government is busy and that some people have better access to government than others. This, of course, is unfair when we're dealing with public policy that is supposed to affect the public interest.

We need this legislation. Yes, indeed, we do need this legislation. We do need integrity in government, absolutely. We do need transparency. We need to know who is lobbying whom, for what reason, and for whom. This is all-important. This bill is an important first step. It brings us closer to providing this kind of transparency. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, it's a bit late, but I suppose better late than never. It is a bit late.

I gave the example of the still-anticipated — in fact, it is curious. Isn't it the Premier himself who has expressed some impatience about the arrival of this new emissions act? Haven't we heard the Premier say that?

There's a very interesting quote that was printed in the Lobby Monitor, which is a publication that looks after the activities of lobbyists who register up in Ottawa, in the federal capital, the federal government. The quote is from Minister Harvie Andre, who was a minister with the Mulroney government, a PC. At one of the receptions that he attended in the village of Rockcliffe Park, which is a very exclusive area within Ottawa-Carleton, he said, "Why does it pay better to know Harvie Andre than to be Harvie Andre?"

I think that's a very telling comment. It's a very telling comment about the role that the lobbyist industry has in terms of satisfying its clients as to ensuring that its clients are well informed about new government initiatives, making sure that its clients' views are well known to the government, and making sure that the government is at least aware of the implications of any proposed policy on its clients.

The government, as we must remember, is not there to serve individual private interests, whether it be of organizations or corporations or trade unions or special interest groups or what have you. Yes, it must be aware of the implications of its policy on all the players. It would be foolish if it did not go out and seek advice from these players. But the process has to be transparent.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks, the one thing that destroys or disturbs the public's confidence in the integrity of the government's process is the concept that there is an ability for some favoured few who have inside connections with the party in power to influence policy for the benefit of the few.

That is why we embrace this bill. We think this bill, by providing a registry, by ensuring that lobbying activities are recorded within the registry, that people can see who is registered, who are the clients and where they are lobbying — these are all important things.

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I'd like to give a small example of what the federal registry has. Just by happenstance I pulled out a name familiar to us all, one Robert K. Rae, a partner with Goodman Phillips and Vineberg. He has registered with the federal lobbyists' registry. His client happens to be the Disney corporation, and it gives the contact within the Walt Disney corporation, 500 South Buenavista Street in the city of Burbank, California. It gives all that. The subject matters, the areas of concern: arts and culture, taxation and finance; specific particulars, the Income Tax Act, policies dealing with film production services, a limited partnership program etc. The government institutions that are being lobbied or could be lobbied by Mr Rae include the Canadian Heritage Foundation, Revenue Canada, Industry Canada and Transport Canada. His organization receives no government funding and receives no contingency fees.

This is one other difference between what is being proposed to us today by the government and the federal model: the issue of contingency fees. The federal legislation has a prohibition dealing with contingency fees. This government apparently believes that contingency fees are perfectly all right, that a lobbyist's pay, as it were, is contingent upon their success in getting a policy adopted or accepted by the government. Again, there are serious concerns about whether we should permit contingency fees to be allowed within lobbying, because it certainly changes the whole context of lobbying.

The communication technique that is being used by Mr Rae when he lobbies on behalf of the Walt Disney corporation on matters of arts and culture with these government departments may include arranging one or more meetings, may include telephone calls, may include written communications or electronic communications or what have you — very straightforward, very up front, very appropriate; indeed I think a model I am pleased to see this government is going to include.

I cannot for the life of me understand therefore, when we have such a model in place that merely reports on who the lobbyist is, what area they are going to lobby and for whom they are going to lobby, that the government would conceive of giving itself the opportunity to exclude from its legislation through regulation any area within government. Why should the government be permitted to exclude the Ontario Energy Board or the Ontario Municipal Board, or indeed the Ministry of Community and Social Services when it is developing its policies with respect to

disability, or the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture when it is developing its policies with respect to disability, or indeed any other government program or activity or policy or contract?

Again, I don't understand why the government would exclude the lobbying for contracts. We can think of the lobbying for the bus contracts within this particular government. There was a time when there was an open playing field with lobbying for the bus construction contracts, but then the government of the day said, "No, there will be one manufacturer." How did this come about? How did the government come to this decision that one, and only one, manufacturer should be so favoured? We could go on with the list.

This is an important bill. It's an important first step. I think I've outlined some of the deficiencies we hope to correct through the committee process. I think it's important that, as with all legislation, there be the ability to perfect the bill, and I hope the government will be willing to consider those aspects that would make the whole process of government meet a good standard, an appropriate standard of integrity.

But we have to understand that this legislation only deals with one shoe of the issue of lobbying. Again, I have to ask my colleagues to turn their attention to what's going on in the United States. This legislation only looks at registering who lobbies and their clients, and lists only the government agencies. Do you know what? For the lobbyist industry, this is great. The lobbyist industry thinks: "That's fantastic, because now I can go over and look at what my competition's doing. If they've got the trucking company, which is interested in speed limits, then maybe I can go and talk to some other organization and put together a partnership and maybe come in and either compete for the individual companies that are involved here or put together another proposal to again lobby about speed limits."

That's fine and dandy for the lobbyist industry to be able to see who's out there and raid each other's clients, but what's missing here in terms of protecting the public interest is who in government is being lobbied. Are we talking about the director of policy within the Ministry of Transportation? Are we talking about the assistant deputy minister responsible for trucking policy in the Ministry of Transportation? Or are we talking about a ministerial aide to the Minister of Transportation?

All these things have different implications, because if the lobbying activity is directed towards the minister's aide, there is clearly competition with the advice that's coming forward from the public service that is supposed to be neutral, serving the public interest, going forward to the minister.

If it is indeed at the working level of the public servant, of course it's important to hear from that industry with respect to this, but it's also important to make sure that that civil servant is hearing from all players, not necessarily just the trucking industry, but the people who are concerned about — I'll take Mothers Against Drunk Driving,

the people who wish to stop people who run through traffic lights etc.

So this shoe has not dropped in this legislation, and it's an important concept. It's not here. I'm sure we'll hear representation about that at committee. But we are only covering one half of the lobbyist activity, because lobbyists lobby somebody, and that's missing from this legislation.

As my colleagues have alluded to earlier, this is indeed an important first step. Its timing is highly suspect, as we understand that many architects who put together the policies this government has in place have flown the coop and joined the lobbyist industry. It's their right to do so, but had we had this legislation in place, we would have been able to avoid the very clear example of conflict of interest in the Niagara casino scandal, with respect to the awarding of that contract. The independent panel rated the companies, and the one that was rated third ended up winning the contract, because the very person who provided the advice to the government was actually an agent for that third-rated company that ended up winning the contract. Quite clearly, if we had had this legislation in place, we would have seen that conflict of interest, we would have seen who was lobbying whom, and there would have been more transparency to the process and therefore more guarantee that there was integrity to the government process.

No government is ever immune from the need to ensure that the process must retain its integrity. That is why we see this legislation in place in many jurisdictions in North America, but I do have to tell you that this is no cutting-edge legislation compared to what's going on in other jurisdictions. The need to require disclosure to protect the public interest is paramount, because that is indeed the bottom line: protecting the public interest.

2010

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I want to join my colleague from Ottawa West in speaking to the second reading of Bill 69, a modest proposal entitled the Lobbyists Registration Act, and to indicate at the outset that I intend to support it. My colleague from Ottawa West and other members who have spoken to the debate have indicated that it is past time that we enact this as a minimum first step to open some light of public awareness and scrutiny on a fast-growing part of the political culture of our province, our country and increasingly of the developed world.

The question I want to address tonight is a more fundamental one, and that has to do with, what is it that's bringing about the exponential growth in lobbying activity? I want to say at the outset that lobbying has always been a part of democratic politics. It has to be acknowledged that in many cases the past — and I'm talking now about a past beyond yesterday, an earlier time. The history of this Legislature is coloured in some respects with some pretty scandalous behaviour of members who were clearly in the employ of certain lobbies.

Time doesn't permit tonight, but there's a famous story of a very powerful Premier of Ontario, Howard Ferguson,

back in the 1920s — actually, he wasn't Premier; it was at an earlier time — when my party was embracing the temperance issue; we were out to ban the bar. Mr Ferguson was able to stand in his place on the Treasury bench of this selfsame assembly and literally undress one of the Liberal opposition members who had the stupidity to write a letter as to how willing he was to sell his soul to the liquor industry and for how much he was prepared to sell his soul. There are several examples I could cite about past lobbying practices, the odd one of which became public, most of which were private. Some of the lobbying was so powerful and so subtle it was not known to very many people indeed.

The point I want to make is that lobbying is certainly a growth industry, nowhere more so than in other jurisdictions, though it is certainly a growing industry here. I was struck a few years ago — not that many years ago — in Britain when we found out that a couple of government backbenchers were actually taking £1,000 from special business interests to write order paper questions. Can you imagine? Members of the British House of Commons were actually taking payment, I think £1,000, per order paper question. That was in the British Parliament about three or four years ago.

As has been mentioned earlier, nowhere is the great barbecue in lobbying more evident than in the United States. In the last couple of weeks there have been a couple of very telling analyses of the state of lobbying in the great American republic. I wanted to take a moment tonight to talk a little bit about what the New York Times reported in its editions of September 29 and 30, 1998, a marvellous pair of extensive front-page articles on the influence industry, on the notorious K Street in Washington.

I say as a member of Parliament, as a member of this Legislature and therefore as a member of the political class, that nothing was more embarrassing than seeing how many of our gang, former members of both houses of Congress, the Senate and the House of Representatives, many of them very distinguished, people like Howard Baker and George Mitchell, to name two, both former Senate majority leaders, who had sold themselves, in one case to the tobacco lobby and I forget what it was in the case of Senator Mitchell — a shameless selling of political connections to, in some cases, some of the most nefarious lobbies in the United States. I certainly put the tobacco lobby in that category.

What did the New York Times tell us in the articles of September 29 and 30, entitled "The Influence Industry"? Quoting from that article, the article of September 29, from the New York Times:

"Some of the most expensive lobbying campaigns have sought to ensure that nothing happens, like the \$100-million effort to kill the anti-tobacco legislation.

"...the best lobbyists are like paid assassins," said Jennifer Shecter of the Center for Responsive Politics, a research group in Washington.

"Lobbyists," the article goes on to tell us, "have always been a part of" the fabric of Washington's politics, but

never before has lobbying been so intimately interwoven with government. "Twenty years ago," the *Times* tells us, "most Washington law firms did little or no lobbying. Now virtually all of them have bustling lobbying practices, and some have even hired non-lawyers to increase their political clout."

The well-known American political analyst Kevin Phillips, author of, among others, the book entitled *Arrogant Capital*, "worries that Washington has become what the founding fathers feared, a 'capital so privileged and incestuous in its dealings,'" that the average person will believe it is no longer accessible to the average person.

According to this article in the *Times* of a couple of weeks ago, there are now at least 128 former members of Congress working actively and registered as lobbyists in Washington.

The article goes on to talk about a senior congressional staff person, a Mr Kies, who in his previous life was the chief of staff for the joint committee on taxation. He is now being paid something in excess of \$1 million, according to this article, to lobby for corporate America, and according to this particular analysis, he is having very considerable success.

The article goes on to talk about Jack Valenti, Lyndon Johnson's former press secretary when Johnson was President. Valenti has been a very prominent lobbyist in Washington for 25 years, well known to Washington power brokers as the spokesperson for Hollywood, the Motion Picture Association of America. Valenti, who himself earns over \$1 million, says, "I don't need any lobbyists for access or entree," but, he says, "I need roots" for the field work.

The article goes on to talk about how the new game in Washington is fabricating citizens' participation, creating citizens' movements for everything from tax relief to anti-gun or anti-tobacco legislation. It's incredible.

They talk in one of these articles about a Texan activist named Linbeck, "a lanky, bow-tied executive" who plans to spend \$90 million over the next number of years to replace the federal income tax with a national sales tax — \$90 million he plans to spend over the next number of years. He tells you that he expects it to be a medium- to long-term campaign. He's got all the best Democrats and Republicans lobbying, and one of the things they're doing is that they're out creating citizens' movements.

These articles tell us something about the state of our civic culture. These lobbyists are thriving because much of our traditional civic culture is dying. We should be concerned about that.

Ursula Franklin gave the Kilbourn lecture the other night, and I thought she made a very powerful point about what was happening to citizen activism here in Toronto. It's not as healthy as it was some time ago. I think we're all experiencing that. The lobbyists, and the special interests they now represent, clearly are very happy to fill the void, to create the citizen movements.

Why, you might ask, is this happening? I'm no expert, but let me tell you, the lobbyists are thriving because, as I said a moment ago, our civic culture is in poor health. I

would argue that some of the reasons for the failing health of our civic culture have to do with such things as the rise of television and the Internet, the dramatic growth of the suburban political culture. With things like the growth of the suburban culture, the power of television, the power of the Net, we find ourselves not going to the neighbourhood meetings, by and large, but we react to one another through independent third-party technology like the Net, like television.

Someone else who has been writing some very interesting things in a related fashion is a very noted Canadian political scientist, Professor C.E.S. Franks, Ned Franks, from Queen's University, who in 1987 wrote a book called *The Parliament of Canada*, and who last year authored a paper for the Privy Council office in Ottawa called *Parliament, Intergovernmental Relations, and National Unity*, a 75-page essay done last year for the government of Canada. What does Professor Franks tell us about the state of Parliament and Canadian parliamentary democracy? Basically, he tell us that our Parliament is sick and getting sicker, ineffectual and getting more and more ineffectual with every passing day. He also points out that our political parties are now not much more than fundraising organizations. I think we had better stop and take stock.

2020

I have been increasingly concerned about the health or the lack thereof of the parties in this system of ours, both nationally and provincially. We are, my friends, today witnessing the death throes of one of the great national parties of this country's bicultural, binational existence, and it is not a laughing matter. The party that Macdonald built 140 years ago as a national, intersectional political party in the pre-Confederation era of the 1840s and 1850s and 1860s is dying. That ought to concern us greatly. And we have a national Parliament that is the most dysfunctional national Parliament we have seen in the post-Confederation era. We have a national Parliament where the two principal opposition parties agree on only one thing, namely, that Quebec should go, leave the federation. These things matter.

As I say, the state of political party health — and I don't mean this as a criticism of the current government, because it is equally powerful as a criticism of my own party. They're in bad shape. They exist for not much more than raising money and trying to organize elections in this increasingly television-centred suburban political world.

The question you might ask is, what does this mean for Bill 69? I'll tell you what it means. It is a very fertile field for the lobbyists. They are flourishing, as Parliament gags and chokes and staggers to an ever more evident irrelevance, as the political parties become more and more pathetic in what it is they don't do and what they don't represent. If you think I'm making this up, Franks is a lot more brutal and blunt than I am. He goes on to talk about the very sick state of our political culture. I won't bother to read it, because time does not permit.

Is it any wonder that we've got people leaving Congress and leaving Parliament and leaving the Legislature

to go and earn three and four and five times as much money and have real influence on public policy? I think not. My point in making this passionate plea tonight to this House and to the political system that it's supposed to represent and to the broader community that undergirds it all is that we had better understand that Bill 69 is truly one very modest proposal — a positive step, a step in the right direction, to be sure. But this political culture of ours, this parliamentary world of ours, is afflicted with a far more serious and more deadly virus. And let me tell you, Bill 69 is not going to provide the kind of relief that's going to bring this patient back from the edge of disaster and death.

I have spent this past number of weeks as a member of the standing committee of this Legislature dealing with the very important question of the restructuring of the electricity market in Ontario. A more important piece of legislation I have not seen in my lifetime here in the Legislature over 23 years. It is a hugely complicated, enormously important piece of economic and social policy. And what did we have? We had eight days of public hearings in the pit of August. We had some clause-by-clause last week. A lot of people who wanted to participate weren't able to get to the committee because the time constraints were so tight. I understand why the government would want to do that. It's part of a long tripartisan tradition of making the legislative and parliamentary process as irrelevant as possible.

If it ended there, I would not be as concerned as I am. I've been around long enough to see what I saw and to know what I know. I have never seen so much lobbying, and for good reason. The electricity market in Ontario is a \$10-billion business. Fortunes will be made as a result of this Bill 35. It touches on absolutely enormous and hugely important financial interests. As was the case in California, Connecticut, Great Britain and Australia, those very powerful interests that are going to be affected with electricity restructuring are at the table with their lobbyists, with their lawyers, with all the power and might that you could imagine they would apply to interests that were so powerful and so evidently pecuniary.

I don't think there's any sense around the Legislature of how irrelevant we have been to that process and how incredibly important and signal has the lobby world been to the structure of the bill and, more importantly, its regulations. I don't think there are very many people in this chamber who have a beginning of an understanding of what has gone on and what continues to go on. You see, the argument — and sometimes I know I bore my colleagues by reciting the New York Times or the —

Interjection.

Mr Conway: I only mention it because, you see, we are in our own way sometimes predisposed to believe that it's just those Americans. I was in the House here a few months ago reading New York Times articles about what was going on in the Connecticut state Legislature when they were restructuring their electricity sector. There, of course, it is more open. It is a catch-as-catch-can kind of wrestling match, and they do have a somewhat more open

process. It's brutal, but there was a far better understanding of the kind of water polo game that was being played, particularly underneath the waterline.

We in our own Upper Canadian sense of purity think, "Oh, we're better than that." In some ways I think we are, but we make a very big mistake if we think the kinds of shenanigans that have gone on in places like Connecticut and California as they restructure their electricity market are not going on here. It's just like the old Ontario way — we prefer not to see it. It's kind of like our liquor policy of old. We knew it was sinful, but as long as you bought it from a government store in the most inconvenient location in your community, signed a bunch of forms and walked out into the broad daylight with the demon rum wrapped in heavy gauge brown paper bags, you could sin in Ontario. That's the kind of mentality we sometimes apply to the workings of the lobby.

It's not just here, although my sources tell me that a very significant downtown management law firm effectively wrote this government's response to the old Bill 7. I happen to believe that. I think Hicks Morley had quite a lot to do with the rewriting of the labour legislation that the new government brought forward in response to —

Mr Baird: Put the evidence on the table.

Mr Cullen: They publish it. They're proud of it.

Mr Baird: Back it up. Tell us how you know that.

Mr Conway: Some people here who are barking loudly have much closer and more direct links to Hicks Morley than I, I can assure my friend from Nepean. I want to say, we have seen it before.

Mr Baird: You are the one making the accusations.

Mr Conway: I think somebody should cap the unnatural gas from Nepean while I try to make my point. I have to say that we have seen in Ottawa the lobbying around the defence contracts. We have seen lobbying around a variety of other very significant initiatives. I simply want to make the point that it's taking place in an environment where a number of the traditional instruments of our politics are not working, and I think we ought to take some very careful regard of that.

This bill is clearly flawed in that it allows the Integrity Commissioner to do only what the Chair of Management Board permits. That is clearly a serious deficit, default problem with Bill 69. As my colleague from Ottawa West pointed out, the legislation does not impose a code of conduct on the business, on the industry. I think that is also a deficiency. The idea that the cabinet, any cabinet, could exempt an individual or a class of individuals from the sanctions and the provisions of Bill 69: Let me tell you that it's pretty clear to me the very serious problem that presents.

2030

There's another issue as well that I'd like to touch upon in the time left me insofar as the role and the increased role of lobbying is concerned, and that is a trend that I think is truly alarming. Yes, it is true that the business of government, even in this age of retrenchment, is still complex and wide-ranging. I'll tell you, if you are dealing with electricity restructuring, if you are dealing with elaborate

tax codes, if you are dealing with a variety of other issues that one could imagine — the regulation of the financial services sector, environmental regulation and protection, to name three or four areas — those are very complicated dossiers. The average legislator, the average generalist, is going to have a very real difficulty in coming to terms with that file.

The interesting thing about Professor Franks in his analysis of the unhappy state of Canadian Parliament is it turns on one essential finding. He says Parliament in this country is not working in significant part because parliaments, both nationally and locally in the several provinces, are peopled by, he calls them, short-term amateurs. I think that's probably a fair analysis. We're all amateurs here in the sense that few of us bring a specialized knowledge and often, when we do, the conflict-of-interest rules do not allow us to get very close to that area of public policy and debate. As Professor Franks points out, we have not only short-term amateurs, but he makes the point that many of these people, feeling completely unsatisfied with their work, leave, so the power of cabinet and specialized, highly focused, very disciplined lobbies has a much greater impact on the final design of policies in a wide range of areas, but particularly in areas where there are technical or other aspects of complexity.

One thing that is happening as a result of smaller government, and it's certainly happened here in Ontario in the past few years, is that we are to some real degree privatizing our public services. We are privatizing the old civil service. It is interesting when one looks at the New York Times article to see how many people have left the US federal public service, as well as Congress, to go and work in the private sector for lobbying or legal houses. Price Waterhouse, for example, in Washington, has developed a very strong competence in areas that had traditionally been the almost exclusive preserve of the public service. We are going to have to really seriously think about the implications, not just for the lobbyist but for the public good in general, of this growing trend to privatize the public service and the business of the public service.

Mr Hastings: That's what happens when you politicize the public service.

Mr Conway: My friend from Etobicoke-Rexdale makes a good point. He says that happened because we politicized the in-house public service, and I think he makes a good point. Much of what's happening today is clearly a reaction to what happened in the era of the Great Society of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, and I understand that. The member makes a good point. But let me tell you that these changes will have, are having, a real, measurable and not always, if often, positive impact on the public good. That is the question we really have to turn our minds to. What is it that our society in 1998 would conceive of as a public good? It is clear from these articles in the New York Times that a lot of former politicians and former political aides in Washington, and yes, in Ottawa and Toronto, are deciding that private gain, the big buck — this Mr Kies, who left the House taxation committee where he was paid US\$132,000, went to the lobby where

he's been paid a million bucks, there to join a very distinguished crew, some of whose names I gave you before.

I want to say, the moneychangers are all about the temple and the public good is in some very real jeopardy here. If you think that a highly disciplined, highly financed lobby is going to write legislation on environmental protection, on financial service reform, on tobacco legislation in the public interest, think again. I can tell you that the big tobacco lobby is not hiring the likes of Howard Baker and a variety of these other senatorial and congressional luminaries because they are concerned about the public health of Americans. As was pointed out earlier, they are hiring these people to make sure that certain things don't happen.

Many things that we know are clearly supported by the broad base of the American community. The challenge in this new world of ours, this suburban political culture, this world where it's all about television and the Net, where the new game in Washington is to go out and hire the best and the brightest to fabricate — think about this, and I'm not making it up, it's reported in those articles I mentioned earlier. The new business in the lobbying game in Washington is to go out and fabricate citizens' movements. Who ever heard of such corruption? It is democracy inside out and upside down, possible only in this bizarre new world order in which we find ourselves.

I live in a part of the world where, happily, in small-town rural eastern Ontario — and my friends from places like Oxford and some others will know what of I speak because I believe it to be the same there — it is still possible in places like Dereham, Alice and Fraser and a number of these smaller centres to have some sense of that neighbourhood meeting with an ongoing purpose and some ongoing impact. But that's the exception now. The rule is television, suburbia, and you can see it everywhere in our politics and our public policy-making.

That's the change that's making the opportunity for the lobbyists so powerful, so lucrative and so promising. At the same time, when our traditional political institutions — and I say this very bluntly and not very happily: Franks is right. Parliament and the legislatures are generally a mess, and they're getting weaker and sicker with every passing month. The political parties, quite frankly, in some fundamental respects should be ashamed of themselves. Some of their problems are not easy to fix. But I'm going to tell you, when I see on the ground what now constitutes activity in a modern Canadian political party, I have some very real problems telling thoughtful, community-minded people to engage that process. I want to change it, I want to improve it but, I'm going to tell you, it is a core of our system.

Remember what our political system, at least in this province and country, turns on. Parliament was supposed to be a very important central place that elected a government, held it accountable and organized itself into competing political organizations called parties. Whether we like it or not, that is the informing logic of our system. Plainly, evidently, sadly, that theory is not working today. It's broken down. A lot of the tinkering that is offered by

politicians and academics will not solve the problems, because, quite frankly, we have not sufficiently recognized that the problems are more basic, they're more cultural, they're more systemic. We have a growing crisis in our civic culture, and because that civic culture is so weakened it is very exposed to a takeover by lobbyists and other special interests.

I'm happy to rise here tonight and support Bill 69. I would like to see a couple of improvements like the ones I've mentioned, particularly around the establishment of a clear code, like withdrawing the directive power of the Chair of Management Board to the Integrity Commissioner. I'd like to see that fixed as well. But I'll tell you, my fellow parliamentarians, if we don't deal with the fundamental underlying problems with our civic and parliamentary culture, ask not for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for us and this institution.

2040

The Acting Speaker (Mr John L. Parker): Questions and comments?

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): As always, it's a pleasure to listen to the member for Renfrew North when he recounts his own history of this place and his knowledge and experience and tries to impart some of that knowledge to government members, who don't have that benefit but seem, on occasion after occasion, to fail to take it into consideration.

I don't share his sadness about the death of the party that Macdonald built, however, but I do share many of the concerns he expressed, especially about the growth of the lobby business in the United States and the fact that there are so many Washington law firms that now find it as the biggest part of their business to be involved in lobbying Congress and why life inside the Beltway is now what it has become. There's a good reason for that development, and it's all because of the incredible amounts of money that can be made by engaging in lobbying activities. Of course, it does have an impact on the democratic process, because what it does, as the member said, is lead not only to more intense lobbying, but by the fabrication of citizens' movements. What that means, really, is that there are a lot of people who are involved in manufacturing consent.

We know that people like Hill and Knowlton are experts when it comes to that. We all remember the example of the campaign that led up to the invasion of Iraq by the United States, which was based on that very principle. It's unfortunate if our democratic process becomes subject to being used like that on a regular basis. This is a modest proposal to try to address that.

Mr Grimmatt: I'm pleased to provide some comments and a question regarding the speeches given by the member for Ottawa West and the member for Renfrew North. There's certainly a contrast in style, in listening to the two speakers, and we've come to enjoy the comments made by the member for Renfrew North; I certainly have. I've been here a lot less time than many of the members, but the member for Renfrew North spoke at great length about a

number of things that perhaps are well understood by a lot of us, some of the frustrations with the political process.

The member for Ottawa West was perhaps a little bit more on topic in terms of dealing with the details of Bill 69 and had some good questions. I'll try to answer some of them. The matter of excluding the code of conduct that's in the federal legislation is certainly an issue the member for Ottawa West raised, and I would like to indicate that the federal code of conduct covers the relationship between lobbyists and their clients. It deals with the relationship between a lobbyist and a person who employs that lobbyist. This legislation is designed to deal with the relationship between the lobbyist and the person in public office. There is quite a significant difference there, and it certainly is felt that the relationship between the lobbyist and the client, the person who's employing them, is something that is beyond the purview of legislation designed to provide the public with some idea about who is lobbying and what they're lobbying about. I think there is quite a distinction there.

I did want to ask the member for Renfrew North if, in saying that the civic culture has weakened and that we're subject to a takeover, he means that at one time, when Premier Ferguson was in power, the people in his riding knew the difference between the federal and provincial member and which went to Toronto and which went to Ottawa?

Mr Patten: It's a pleasure, actually, to comment on the presentations of the member for Ottawa West and the member for Ottawa — not Ottawa, but he visits us from time to time; the member for Renfrew North.

The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale said earlier that he looked forward to some positive, concrete, constructive suggestions. We have, I believe — I took notes on both speeches — a number of suggestions that would ameliorate the legislation, as identified quite specifically by the member for Ottawa West.

My friend the member for Renfrew North, in his Churchillian persuasion, tends to elevate the discussion to the bigger questions or perhaps the more fundamental questions that legislation of this nature raises; I believe them to be of vital importance on a personal basis as well. If we ask ourselves, "Do we have today the kind of quality of government, in its operations and in its behaviours, that we believe is the best of what we are or could be?" I would hazard a guess that most members would say, "No, it is not." Therefore, that question has to be behind some of the reflection that a bill of this nature raises for all of us, because in the final analysis we must admit that because of a certain approach or denigration of the Legislature itself, it's provided a heck of a lot of room for lobbyists to come and present points of view where the procedures of the House have failed and have been denigrated or diminished somewhat before the people.

Mr Bisson: Commenting on the member for Renfrew North being described as Churchillian, I didn't even know he smoked cigars, and he'd probably have to put on another 30 to 50 pounds to get to that status. Anyway, I don't want to go there. I'll just stay away from that one.

There are two things I'd want to put on the record to what the member for Renfrew North had to say. I agree with him, although he didn't state this categorically, that my sense of part of why the government is doing all of this has little to do with trying to get at what they are perceiving to be a big problem but more to do with the aesthetics or the sense that they are trying to do something about lobbyists as if it's a big problem in Ontario.

I've had the privilege of serving on both sides of the House, both in government and in opposition, and I can tell you that the problem of lobbyists is nowhere near the problem here in Ontario that you'll find in the United States of America or maybe even to a certain extent what happens in Ottawa on the Hill. Here in Ontario there's not a lot of activity that way. You don't see a whole bunch of fancy-priced lobbyists going around the halls of Queen's Park trying to influence the decisions of cabinet ministers or influence the decisions of other members of the Legislature. It's not the way the Legislature operates.

I somehow have a sense that part of what the government is doing is trying to send a message out there in the image of what they want to be able to present in the next election, and that has more to do with why this legislation is being brought forward.

I would also want to hear from the member for Renfrew North when it comes to, does he believe his eyes that this bill is going to get lots of committee hearings? Does he believe his eyes that this government is going to travel this bill through a whole bunch of committee hearings in different town across Ontario? We're going to have all kinds of committee hearings. They're going to be probably in Sault Ste Marie, Sudbury, Ottawa, Toronto and all over, but they won't travel something like the Hydro bill to the same extent. I'd like to hear what he has to say about that.

The Acting Speaker: Response? The member for Ottawa West.

Mr Cullen: I'd like to thank the members for Windsor-Riverside, Muskoka-Georgian Bay, Ottawa Centre and Cochrane South for their contributions to this debate.

I really want to underline, I hope adequately, the point that the member for Renfrew North is making. That is, in terms of his meta-analysis, if indeed government is being captured by private interests, then we need to have a mechanism to restore government to the people who elected it, to the people who spent this money, to the people who must hold it accountable for its policies. This is but one small step towards that. I think that's very important, and I think the member for Renfrew North said it best.

In terms of the comments from the member for Cochrane South, all I can say is, it's a \$56-billion industry that we have here called the government of Ontario. When the government of Ontario spends \$56 billion, when it has so much responsibility in all the areas that it legislates and regulates, then obviously there is a lot of stuff going on that we don't see, that the public doesn't see. It calls into question the whole process of government.

Specifically to the issues that the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay raised, he talked about the code of conduct

and how it was something between the lobbyist and his or her client. Well, it's important to have these things in place because it's what he's doing on behalf of his client that is affecting the public process. To make sure that there is accurate information, disclosure of obligations, no confidentiality of information being disclosed, insider information not being disclosed, conflict of interest being disclosed, improper influence being disclosed protects the public interest.

I would like the parliamentary secretary, when he next has the opportunity, to address the other two issues that both the member for Renfrew North and myself raised, including why it is necessary to have regulation to exempt classes of public servants — we think this is totally wrong — and to ensure that there is true integrity for the role that the Integrity Commissioner is going to play with respect to this legislation.

2050

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Windsor-Riverside.

Mr Lessard: The government might be surprised to hear what I have to say with respect to this legislation, because most of the time I accuse them of going not only too far and too fast but also in the wrong direction. But with this legislation, as has been said earlier on this evening, this is really a modest attempt to try and regulate lobbyists. It's something that the government has been promoting as part of its agenda for over two years now, and it is only now finally bringing this to light. Why that is so is something that I hope to emphasize in my remarks this evening.

Lobbying is not something new. Lobbying has been going on far longer than this place has even been here. All of us are in a position where we're approached by people because they want us to make decisions in a certain way. I like to think, at least for myself, that the decisions I make have the public interest at the forefront on all occasions. That's probably what everyone here, and I'm sure the members in the government, would say is the basis for all of their decision-making as well.

Records with respect to lobbying date back to at least 1792, but something has certainly changed here in the last three years to necessitate some real, sincere efforts to regulate the lobbyist movement. The timing of this legislation is quite telling, I would submit, three years into the government's mandate, after they had referred to this legislation a long time ago. Why are they bringing it forward now? It's because of some of those changes that have taken place that the public has seen in the last few years. They have seen that under the Harris Conservatives there is an agenda of privatization and Americanization that has had the potential to pour millions of dollars into certain people's pockets. That's one of the reasons the government sees fit to require lobbyists to register.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): On a point of order, Speaker: I don't believe there's a quorum in the House. Would you check, please?

The Acting Speaker: Could the clerk advise us if there's a quorum?

Acting Clerk at the Table (Ms Donna Bryce): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Acting Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Windsor-Riverside.

Mr Lessard: I was referring to some of the examples that we have seen in the last three years of the Harris Conservative agenda that have really necessitated the introduction of lobbyist legislation, and I was talking about the privatization and the Americanization agenda that is being pursued by this government. I can also think about the millions and millions of dollars that can be made on the deregulation and privatization of Ontario Hydro through the initiative of Bill 35. That was referred to by the member for Renfrew North earlier this evening.

I had the opportunity to be on the committee hearings that looked into Bill 35 and to hear the submissions of many people who came before us. Although we did hear a great many submissions, we knew that there were a lot of people who stand to benefit from the deregulation and reorganization of Ontario Hydro that we didn't hear from. As the member for Renfrew North said, there's a lot of work happening below the waterline when it comes to Bill 35 and Ontario Hydro. There are people who can benefit not only from the privatization of Ontario Hydro, but also from the financing of it. That's why we were so concerned when we saw Mr Farlinger going to Newcourt Credit, for example, because that's a financial corporation that is going to be able to benefit substantially from the opportunities of providing financing for those who are going to take advantage of the opportunities of the breakup of Ontario Hydro.

I think as well of the money that's being dreamed of by operators of private jails, for example. We can see the privatization of jails in Ontario. We heard an announcement just a few weeks ago about the superjail that is going to be located in eastern Ontario and a number of smaller jails that are going to close as a result of that. I have no doubt that there are going to be more and more private operators of jails here in Ontario.

I think as well about companies that win contracts to maintain highways. That happened in southwestern Ontario between Chatham and Windsor. The work that was done previously by the Ministry of Transportation was contracted out to a private consortium. It's interesting to note that notwithstanding the fact that the government promoted the privatization of those maintenance contracts as a way to save millions of dollars, it hasn't really turned out that way. Those savings haven't been there, but there certainly have been people who have profited from that exercise in any event.

We also have the example of Casino Niagara. I know the member for St Catharines has a keen interest in what happened surrounding the bidding process at Casino Niagara and who it was that finally ended up with that contract and how it was that they ended up with that contract.

We're also going to be seeing the leasing back of public schools as the school boards find themselves strapped for funds and need to look at more creative ways of building those schools. No doubt those will be schools that will be built primarily by the private sector, which will then lease them back to public school boards and will benefit financially from that.

Those are some of the changes we've seen in Ontario in the last three years that have necessitated this type of legislation, as we see in Bill 69. As I said, corporations, trade unions and citizen groups have always lobbied to influence government policy in government legislation, but the difference we see today and have seen in the last few years is that the result of those lobbying efforts and of many of the decisions we have seen this government make is that they mean huge profits for corporations and specific individuals. Millions of dollars are to be made by the efforts of lobbyists in this case. Rather than making sure that decisions are made in the public interest or to protect the public interest, more and more often we're seeing decisions being made based on who is going to benefit the most financially.

That, I submit, is wrong. It makes this legislation necessary, and I guess it's about time that this government finally found the time to introduce it.

2100

They say it models the federal legislation, which I heard the member for Ottawa West tout as an example we should look towards, as something this government should strive for. However, I should indicate that people like Democracy Watch, for example, have been quite critical of the federal Liberal lobbying legislation, and there is good reason for that. That is because many of the changes that have been introduced by the Liberals haven't gone far enough to deal with the advancements that have taken place in lobbyists' efforts. As parliamentarians, we need to ensure that we're at the forefront of making sure that there is close regulation and close scrutiny of lobbyists.

I have a document that was prepared by Democracy Watch several years ago that was the result of some of their lobbying efforts on the federal government to make changes in the lobbying legislation. They refer to a Liberal Party campaign document called Creating Opportunity and mention the Liberal promises. They say, "Liberal candidates likened lobbying to the crime of influence peddling and promised to 'end the backroom power' of lobbyists." That's what they intended to do when they enacted the changes they did.

What Democracy Watch calls for is the enactment of more stringent restrictions on the activities of lobbyists, as many US jurisdictions have. They talk about the consultations the federal government had been conducting and mention an interesting example. It says that most of those consultations "involved industry representatives and major corporations but few, if any, citizen groups or individual citizens." Perhaps there is a flaw in the process that led to this lobbying legislation.

It goes on to say: "There are approximately 27 million people in Canada, spread across the country. Most Cana-

dians, despite the recent hue and cry about a so-called 'proliferation of special interest groups,' do not have their own lobbyist advocating for them on every issue the federal government addresses."

I think that really is one of the keys. The key element we need to look at here is the fact that the people involved in the drafting of the lobbyist legislation or involved in any public hearings, if they do take place, will be the people who are going to be directly affected by it as an industry. It's not going to be the average residential consumer or ratepayer or small farmer who has a voice in this process. It's got to be somebody who is going to look out for their interests.

One of the recommendations that came about from Democracy Watch is interesting. It says: "In order to bring effect to Prime Minister Chrétien's promise of a 'government that listens to the people,' the Liberal government must determine how to consult with all interested parties, especially members of the public without their own lobbyist in Ottawa, and then must use these consultation methods in every government decision-making process."

That was what Democracy Watch was calling for from the federal Liberal government when they were contemplating changes to their legislation several years ago. Although they did make some of those changes, I have to ask myself whether people consider those changes to have gone far enough.

I think a good illustration of how effective that legislation has been is the fact that since it was enacted, there hasn't been one single example of a violation of it. That means one of two things: that it's had an incredible influence in making sure that people don't violate the act, or that the act really doesn't have any teeth, that there isn't any ability to find out who might be violating the lobbyist legislation and making sure they get charged with an offence.

Somehow, I tend to think that the process of governing in Ottawa hasn't been so squeaky clean in the last 10 to 15 years that there hasn't been a single, even perceived, violation of this lobbyist legislation, which even this government is touting as an example that should be followed and has been followed in the drafting of this legislation.

We need to ask ourselves, if this legislation had been brought forward exactly as it is today right after the election in June 1995, would it have made one single bit of difference with respect to the way this government has managed its agenda in the three years since they've been elected? If this had been in existence three years ago, would it have changed at all any of the questionable activities that we've been raising questions about here in his Legislature day after day after day? Would it have stopped the consultants involved in the Niagara casino bid from advising both the government and the successful bidder at the same time?

We raised those questions on numerous occasions. My colleague the member for Welland-Thorold, and also our leader, Howard Hampton, the member for Rainy River, have mentioned the perceived improprieties with respect to

the granting to the Falls Management group the project in Casino Niagara. On May 28, my colleague Peter Kormos was asking about Leslie Noble, who was one of the chief architects of the Common Sense Revolution, and her involvement as one of the chief players in the Tory-led consortium that lobbied the government after it was elected, to persuade it to change its position on privately run casinos here in the province of Ontario. Would this legislation have made any change in the way that activity took place?

We also raised questions about Bill Noble, who worked for Bill Flaherty and now works for the Gaming Venture Group that was awarded a permanent charity casino. We asked a question about the fact that the Latner family donated \$48,000 or more to the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario and the benefits they enjoyed after having made that contribution. Some say that may be a coincidence. I suppose it could be, and I guess it's up the public to try to decide whether that's the case or not.

We asked over and over again whether the government thought there was anything improper about that. In fact, the government finally agreed to having an investigation of the process surrounding the granting of the contract at Casino Niagara. It's no surprise that it wasn't found to be improper. One may wonder whether that had something to do with the person who was appointed to do the investigation.

We also asked whether this legislation would stop Conservative insider Leslie Noble from selling her lobbying services to Ontario Hydro for \$84,000. Would it have stopped Conservative insider Tom Long from getting a contract for \$250,000 — US, I might add — to find a new chief executive officer for Ontario Hydro? Would it have stopped the scandal of contracts for highway repairs going to a company that hired the ministry official who set up the privatization initiative? Would it have done anything to rein in the many, many former aides and advisers to Michael Harris, starting with Bill King, Ed Arundel, Mitch Patten and many others who are now either seeking government contracts or are working as consultants for companies that seek —

Mr Baird: Or Robin Sears or David Agnew. What about David Agnew?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Come to order, please.

Mr Lessard: I've raised the interest of the government members. I'm pleased to see that government members are as concerned as I am about these perceived improprieties that have taken place in the three years that have led up to the introduction of this legislation. Some may argue that that's the reason this legislation is being introduced now, or else that that's why they've waited all this time, to ensure that their privatization-deregulation agenda was well underway so that many of those instances wouldn't be subject to the scrutiny of the spotlight of legislation like this.

We believe this legislation can be strengthened as well, and I am sincerely hopeful that it will be.

2110

As I indicated, one of the things that I think is paramount in my decision-making, and I would hope for the decision-making of everyone who is here, is the protection of the public interest, not the interests of the lobbyists or the people they represent but the public interest, the people who don't have the millions of dollars to influence the decisions we make here today but are impacted by them.

I know that on September 9, 1998, the minister released a press release and talked about the legislation that he was going to be introducing. He says, "This proposed legislation supports our commitment to ensure government activities are conducted openly, fairly and transparently while protecting any provincial government from undue influence." He goes on to say, "Lobbying is part of the government process and if this legislation is approved, it would help ensure that the public interest is protected." That is the question we need to consider as we're debating this legislation: At the end of the day, will the public interest be protected?

When I see how the public interest has been protected by this government over the last three years, I have some real concern whether this legislation is going to have any impact whatsoever. We've gone through public hearings on Bill 35, as I referred to earlier, the bill to deregulate Ontario Hydro. We have been saying all along that even though this government says their interest in deregulating Ontario Hydro is to ensure that all consumers have lower energy rates — it even says that in the title of the bill — nowhere in the legislation is there any protection or any statement that the objective of the bill is to ensure that lower rates are enjoyed by all consumers. We pushed for that amendment and that was denied. We wonder how that legislation is going to ensure all consumers have lower rates when the government won't even put it in the bill.

In his remarks when the bill was introduced, the minister talked about how his agenda is not privatization of Ontario Hydro. He said that's not on the agenda. We suspect that it is. That's really where this is all going. However, the Market Design Committee that was looking at ways to ensure there be some stability as far as prices for Hydro are concerned, when they gave their report, they were instructed to make that report on the basis that Ontario Hydro would remain, by and large, intact.

We heard from representative after representative before our committee who said that even though the government's intention through Bill 35 is to introduce competition into the energy market, this bill isn't going to do it. If it's not going to introduce real competition to Ontario, it's not going to result in lower energy prices for consumers either.

It was interesting to note that on Friday the Market Design Committee introduced their third report. It's interesting to note that the recommendation in that report is that Ontario Hydro should only control 35% or less of Ontario's electricity supply. If they're only going to control 35%, and they have about 85% to 90% right now, that could only mean one thing, that they're going to be selling a big part of Ontario Hydro to the private sector. My

concern is that there is going to be a whole lot of people who are going to make out very well as a result of the privatization of Ontario Hydro, and a lot of them are waiting in the wings to cash in.

This lobbying legislation will give us the opportunity to find out who those people are, and that's about it. It's not going to be able to tell us anything more than a lot of us already know around here, that people like British Energy PLC, who have been openly lobbying for the opportunity to purchase Ontario Hydro's nuclear assets, have set up a 15-person office here in Ontario waiting for that opportunity.

People may think that people like British Energy may have been trying to exert some influence on the government of Ontario as they were trying to go through the steps they did with respect to Bill 35. One can only imagine why the Market Design Committee is now talking about its recommendations to sell or privatize a big part of Ontario Hydro. Perhaps that could be the influence of people like Sir Graham Day, who was appointed by this government to the board of directors, who is known as the "serial privatizer" in Great Britain, and companies like PowerGen have been involved deeply in the privatization of energy. Those are the people this government has brought on board to help guide them through this process.

The legislation that is being introduced here, Bill 69, wouldn't make any difference as far as the activities are concerned of people like British Energy and other people who want to get their hands on that huge consumer market that is going to result in millions of dollars of profit through the deregulation of Ontario Hydro.

That's one of the great concerns I have: Who is out there going to be looking after the public interest? We know the lobbyists are going to be out there working for a profit on a commission, making millions of dollars from their employers or the people who they work for or the people who may benefit from the result of their lobbyist efforts. That's why we need something to prohibit contingency fees. It's outrageous that lobbyists can base their fees on a contingency basis, that they can be rewarded by ensuring the government provides the benefit they're looking for through their clients.

2120

The difference in philosophy between myself and our party and the government is where I think we need to address our concerns and determine whether this lobbyist legislation addresses those concerns. This government is convinced that the privatization route is the way to go. What that means is that the private sector is going to end up being able to buy a lot of money-making opportunities at bargain basement prices, things that used to be done by the public sector, and all we're going to know about the people who are lobbying on behalf of those special interest groups is their names and who it is they're working for. There's a whole lot more that we need to know about the people who are working for those who are going to be benefiting from the decisions of this government, and also who is going to end up paying for them. When it comes to Ontario Hydro, I'm afraid there are going to be a lot of

large corporate energy consumers who are going to be able to benefit from lower rates, but there's a whole lot of small residential and farm consumers who are going to end up being stuck with the bill.

Why is that going to happen? Because those large corporate interests are going to have lobbyists who are going to ensure they have that ability, whereas small residential and farm consumers aren't going to have a lobbyist to represent them, and that's the responsibility we have.

What happened in New Zealand provides an interesting example of what can happen when a government decides they want to pursue this privatization agenda with such zeal. I'm reading from the *Parliamentarian* of July 1998. It says, "Defending the Public Interest — 'Free Market' or 'free-for-all?'" It's written by an MP in New Zealand, Jim Anderton. He talks about the privatization of electricity in New Zealand. When he was writing this article, four of the main electricity cables leading to the city of Auckland had failed. They failed because, as a result of the privatization of the hydro system in New Zealand, those cables were poorly maintained, the infrastructure wasn't kept up. They all failed, sending the entire city into darkness as a result.

He also talks about who wins and who loses as a result of free market policies they've pursued down there. The problem with pursuing the free market policies that the large corporate lobbyists would like us to pursue is that "continuous restrictions in social spending...have left large gaps in coverage. It is usually the people who have lost their incomes or their security, because of free market policies, who are left most vulnerable. The free market is unable to provide adequate social support services." That's part of the problem with having large corporate sector lobbyists trying to determine what the government's agenda has been.

One example is that "One mental health policy has been to deinstitutionalize people with long-term mental illness." That means that many New Zealanders who are

mentally ill are just abandoned. He asks the question, "Why has New Zealand implemented such a bad set of policies as the so-called 'free market' reforms of the last decade and a half?"

The explanation is quite simple: Self-interest. There are a few people who have done very well indeed as a result of the reforms they have pursued in New Zealand. My fear is that there are a few people who are going to benefit a great deal from the reforms this government is pursuing. They're going to be assisted by people who are in the lobbying business. They're going to be represented quite well by those people. As a result of being influenced by those lobbyists, we are going to have public policy decisions made in Ontario that are going to be detrimental to our social policies and detrimental to the protection of the environment as well.

There was another example that came up recently in the spring, and that was the permit to sell Great Lakes water from Lake Superior. You wonder whether there was some lobbyist who had some influence in ensuring that a permit was granted to sell water from the Great Lakes to Asia, notwithstanding the serious ramifications that decision may have, not only on protection of the environment, but also on the sale of fresh water from the Great Lakes. We all know that as soon as fresh water becomes considered a commodity pursuant to the North American free trade agreement, it could be subject to being exported to other places as well. In addition to Asia, it could be sent down to New Mexico, Texas or California, where the appetite for fresh water is simply voracious and the ability to pay for it is almost unlimited. But is that the sort of policy we should be pursuing, trying to find out who has the most money to pay for our natural resources, fresh water? I don't think that's the sort of policy we want to pursue.

The Acting Speaker: It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2126.

ERRATA

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
1A	2449	1	55	Duntroon school, Heather Mayberry, of her own accord,
1A	2484	2	42	petroleum industry, certainly to indicate their displeasure

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 14 October 1998

Mercredi 14 octobre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 14 October 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 14 octobre 1998

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Mr Speaker, as you are aware, I have raised concerns with the Minister of Long-Term Care about the lack of funding for our community care access centre in Kingston. What has the minister done? Nothing.

Now we see where children fit in with this government. In Kingston the child development centre at the Hotel Dieu Hospital offered assessments through the multi-disciplinary approach for the diagnosis of children suspected of autism. The sooner the diagnosis is made, the sooner treatment can begin for these children. It is imperative that an early diagnosis and treatment is initiated to ensure the best possible outcome for these children. Don't we in Ontario still believe that each individual has the right to develop to his or her potential?

The child development centre at Hotel Dieu has had five consecutive years of funding freeze. This has resulted in the assessment team being cut from a minimum of five to just one assessor. Now parents who can afford to pay for the services for their children must pay, but what about the children whose parents can't afford treatment?

We have a government that has a Minister of Health, a Minister of Long-Term Care and a minister responsible for children's issues. Can you tell me where they are? Who is the advocate in this government for the frail, the elderly, the disabled, the sick, the children? How do you explain the lack of funding for essential homemaking services and for children? Right in the minister's own backyard the CCAC is short of funding. As Dr Pace in Kitchener-Waterloo has said, "We have been misled by politicians who said services will not be interrupted."

In Toronto we have a hospital selling bonds. In Hamilton —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Statements.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Yesterday we saw in our health care system a frightening example of what the Mike Harris revolution means. We had in the greater Toronto area a period of time yesterday in which emerg-

ency wards in 17 of Toronto's 19 hospitals were only accepting the most seriously ill. We had a period of time, in the area between Ajax and Mississauga, home to some four million people in the province, where only two hospitals were able to serve that kind of population in emergency care. It is a frightening example of what has happened as a result of the policies of the Mike Harris government and the cuts to our health care system in placing our hospitals in this kind of situation.

While there are normally situations where there are shortages, the normal situation has never in memory, that anybody can recall, got to the point where you have so many hospitals in a critical situation at the same point in time. When people are asked what is causing this, the one thing we keep hearing about is the shortage of beds. We know that the Minister of Health with some fanfare months ago announced \$225 million which was supposed to fix this problem. The only problem with that is none of that money has actually been spent yet, so I say to the minister, stop making announcements and get the money into the system where we need it.

WHITE RIBBON AGAINST PORNOGRAPHY WEEK

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I proudly stand in the House today to mark the start of national White Ribbon Against Pornography Week, also known as WRAP. The campaign runs from October 18 to 26.

White ribbons have been distributed to all members of the House. I realize we cannot wear them in the House, but I request that the members considering wearing them outside of the House to symbolize their opposition to pornography in our society. We are all responsible for our children and the well-being of our youth. Therefore, governments, communities, society, should be aware of this global problem.

The Catholic Women's League of Cambridge has spearheaded this campaign for eight years. Their goal this year is to support Canadians Addressing Sexual Exploitation in trying to have the federal age of consent law changed from 14 to 18 years. For the second year a poster with the caption "Pornography Hurts" will appear on 30 buses in Cambridge, sponsored by the Catholic Women's League and the Knights of Columbus of Cambridge.

Again, I urge all members of the House to support National WRAP Week.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): This government's education policy is literally coming apart at the seams. There is a school in my riding that is in extremely poor condition, the École Nouveaux-Horizons. Young children of five and six are being forced to endure cramped, inadequate facilities in a building that was scheduled for demolition in 1983. It is located next to a highway that is a danger to students every day.

The past and present school boards agree that building a new facility is a priority. A promise of funding allowed them to purchase a lot where a sign announcing "Future Site of École Nouveaux-Horizons" is still displayed. That promise was then withdrawn.

In response to renewed and urgent requests, a new committee has been created. It is scheduled to release yet another report by December of this year.

The parents have lost patience, and understandably so. Their children are at constant risk at the present site.

I know that the Minister of Education would not want to be held responsible for an accident involving these children. I am therefore asking him to grant emergency funding so that we can proceed with the construction of a new school facility.

The situation is urgent. What we need is funding, not another committee, not another report. Children can't learn in an environment that compares to conditions in some developing countries. Let's fix this embarrassment now.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): When I visited E.L. Crossley school last week, I saw how this government's cuts to educational funding have resulted in more students and fewer teachers.

But you see, teachers aren't the only members of the educational community. I also talked to support staff there. I talked to secretarial staff who told me about having their work year reduced from 12 months down to 10. Not that there are not going to be secretaries working in that school 12 months out of the year, but it means that for two of those 12 months there is going to be contracting out at the lowest possible rate and the loss of those hours to long-time, skilled professional and faithful employees.

In addition to secretarial staff, of course, caretakers play an important role in all our schools. I talked with the caretaking staff there, senior caretakers as well as assistant caretakers, people like Patricia King. She told me about how many of their hours have been reduced to a mere 16 a week, which not only creates an unliveable wage but means they're mere part-time employees rather than full-time. What that means is that they're not entitled to benefits either. Many of these women are the sole income earners and they're the sole parents in their families.

The result of these cuts by Harris and the Tories here at Queen's Park is schools that are less safe, schools that are

creating a poorer quality education and schools that are punishing young children — our children — so that Harris can give a tax cut to his wealthiest friends.

JEFFERSON ELORA CORP

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): Recently, I had the pleasure of visiting Jefferson Elora Corp's open house in Elora. I was pleased to join Elora Reeve Mary Dunlop and officials of the company, including Jefferson's president, Isao Sugibayashi.

Just 18 months ago, Jefferson Elora began operations and it now employs 90 people. The company produces metal stamped parts for the Honda Civic and the new Odyssey minivans, which are built in Alliston.

Much to my delight, during the open house company officials announced a \$30-million expansion of the plant that will create 16 new jobs. The company plans to start production in November 1999.

I'm not surprised that the Jefferson Elora company has made a decision to expand its operations in our area. Company officials have obviously been very satisfied with their experience in Elora.

The expansion is a reflection of the many positive features that the Waterloo and Wellington areas offer: highly skilled and hard-working people, an excellent quality of life, and a sound infrastructure including good transportation networks with proximity to lucrative markets and an improving economy that our government has encouraged through its policies and outlook.

The local government in Elora has my thanks for working hard to create a positive economic climate that attracts expanding industries like Jefferson. As the MPP for Wellington and as our government's small business representative, I will, together with my caucus colleagues, continue to strive to improve conditions that attract jobs and investment to Wellington and Ontario.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): While I'm giving my statement, I'd like to ask Keegan Hawkeswood, one of our pages, from the riding of Windsor-Sandwich, to come over and deliver these post-cards directly to Premier Mike Harris.

These cards say specifically "Give Back Our Tax Dollars." It's a photo of a sign that is still up in my riding. This sign says it all. When the Harris government decides to waste money propagandizing with the use of taxpayers' dollars, I want to tell you that our community objects, because \$41 million has been lost from our health system, specifically from our hospital budgets. The effect of that is clogged gridlock in our emergency rooms. What we see today happening now in Toronto and the greater Toronto area is the same thing.

The worst part about being from Windsor is seeing this happen and knowing that all of it was predictable and, worse, it was preventable, that you chose to cut hospital budgets before any of those organizations could restruc-

ture properly, and now 50% of Ontario hospitals are in debt.

You saw it coming. You could have stopped it and you chose not to. The people from Windsor want this government to know they don't agree with what it has done to our health care system.

Specifically, Ms Kirsch on Josephine says, "The caption says it all," and that caption is: "Mike Harris, our hospitals need help. Our highways don't need more signs." Kathleen Carrigan on Mercer says, "Enough is enough."

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Statements.

1340

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud): Je me demande la question suivante : est-ce que les conservateurs vont nier à nouveau les droits des francophones, et cette fois-ci par le biais du projet de loi 12 ?

Vous savez, monsieur le Président, que le gouvernement est en train de transférer, à travers la Loi 12, les services aux municipalités du nord, y inclus les services d'ambulances et autres services indiqués dans la loi. Encore le gouvernement, dans son approche, à laquelle on est pas mal habitué mais dont on n'est pas trop content, en transférant ces services ne va pas s'assurer que les droits qui sont présentement protégés sous la Loi 8 avec la province vont être transférés aux municipalités.

On a aujourd'hui un amendement qu'on a établi il y a deux semaines au comité des affaires gouvernementales qui dit très simplement que quand on transfère ces services à travers la Loi 12 aux municipalités du nord, on transfère avec ça les droits linguistiques protégés sous la Loi 8. On demande au gouvernement demain à ce comité d'accepter notre amendement, le seul amendement qui a été mis à date sur cette question. Il est très important de supporter notre amendement pour s'assurer que les droits linguistiques des francophones vont être protégés une fois que les services seront transférés aux municipalités du nord.

SCHIZOPHRENIA

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to extend thanks and congratulations to the members of the Guelph chapter of the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario.

To celebrate Schizophrenia Awareness Month, many communities held walks, but Guelph's was special. Guelph's "Wizard's Walk of Hope" was designed to become a model for other communities. The Wizard of Oz attended, as did the Tin Man, the Scarecrow, Dorothy and the Munchkins, and the Cowardly Lion was even brave enough to help people up on the platform. It was a very fun day. But what was most important was the hope that was generated by this very well organized event.

Schizophrenia is a disorder of the brain that affects one in 100 people in Ontario. It's a mental illness that has devastating effects not only on those who suffer from it but on their friends and on their families. The "Wizard's

Walk of Hope" was designed to help people learn about this illness, to know that schizophrenia is a brain disease that has physiological and psychological effects.

What causes it is still unknown. It may be genetic, neurochemical, viral, developmental or allergic. The key is finding a cure through modern methods of research. People are very excited about the new development of effective medication.

It's my pleasure to extend congratulations to Chris Pearson, who is a key organizer in Guelph, and to all of her team. Thanks go to all the participants in the "Wizard's Walk of Hope."

Colleagues, I encourage all of you to meet with your local branches of the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario. Next year the "Wizard's Walk of Hope" will be coming to your community, and remember, it started in Guelph.

WEARING OF PINK RIBBONS

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I'd like to move unanimous consent to permit the wearing of a pink ribbon in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Day today. I have ribbons for members of the assembly who would like to show their support for that day.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Agreed? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health. You will know that last night at one point in time in the entire greater Toronto area, 24 of 25 hospitals were turning people away. Six in fact were unable to even accept the most critical cases. That's one emergency room for over 4.2 million people. This is not the first time this has happened in Mike Harris's Ontario, and tragically, it will not be the last.

Minister, will you now admit that Mike Harris's health care is actually endangering the health of Ontarians?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): To the Leader of the Opposition, no, this isn't the first time. I could indicate to you three examples I have under your administration where you also were in a position where there were redirects; there were critical care bypasses. As you know, the reality is that from time to time these situations do happen. These situations, personally, always concern us, the government. What we have done today is that we have communicated with all the hospitals in order to be assured that at no time were any patients at risk, and we have certainly been given that reassurance by the hospitals.

We understand that part of the situation was that it was a long weekend.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Unfortunately, the hospitals were not totally prepared for the numbers of individuals who came to the emergency rooms yesterday, so —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: This minister does nothing but continue to fiddle while this situation gets out of hand. We have raised this in this House time and time again. In September of last year, you said at that time it was an anomaly, some kind of freak occurrence. Then when it extended through the winter you said, "Well, there's some kind of special flu going on; maybe it's the long-term-care beds that are the problem here."

So you had a study done, and then you said, "Maybe we've got to spend \$225 million." But we discover now that you haven't spent a cent of that money. What is it you're waiting for?

The only thing you have done for sure with respect to hospital care in Ontario is to cut \$800 million. That's the only thing that we're aware of. When is it that you're going to do something to address this crisis that your policies have created in Ontario health care?

Hon Mrs Witmer: First of all, I am very proud of the policies that our government has created. We are the first government that had the courage —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mrs Witmer: We are very pleased that we undertook to strengthen our hospital system. Unfortunately, the excellence of that system had been put at risk by the inaction of previous governments. When I take a look at the Ottawa Citizen of December 26, 1987 — and this was under a Liberal government — it says, "An elderly woman turned away from two area hospitals last weekend died Christmas Day."

We are taking action. We realize that we must ensure that we reduce the waiting times in our emergencies. We are strengthening our hospitals. We are expanding emergency rooms throughout Ontario, including the city of Toronto. We are taking action, which you did not do.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, nobody in this province is buying that. Get out of this place, go knock on a few doors and you'll quickly discover that the number one concern in Ontario today is health care and what you are doing to it. We brought this situation, this crisis in emergency care, to your attention over a year ago.

You at first said, "There's no real problem here." Then you said, "Maybe we'll make up a few excuses for this, things like the flu etc." Then you said, "Maybe we're going to have to spend some money here to rectify the problem," so you came up with this figure of \$225 million. You made the announcement on April 20 of this year. You haven't spent a single penny of that money.

No wonder that last night in the greater Toronto area 24 out of 25 hospitals were turning patients away — one emergency room available for over 4.2 million people. When are you going to admit that this crisis is of your making?

1350

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think the leader recognizes that the issue of the emergency rooms is of long standing. It's unfortunate. If your government had dealt with it in the late 1980s, we wouldn't have the problem we have today.

I am very pleased that we undertook to work co-operatively with the Ontario Hospital Association. The Ontario Hospital Association and the ministry together identified short-term and long-term solutions for dealing with the problem. Part of the responsibility is with the hospitals. They need to ensure that when they use redirect or use the bypass, they all use the same types of standards. We know that there is a variation in standards.

We all need to ensure we are doing everything we possibly can together. I would remind you, hospitals are autonomous corporations and they need to ensure that they can provide for the needs of the patients. We are working with the hospitals to ensure that they have the support to do that.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): A question to the same minister: If you want to start comparing governments, the only one on record for cutting \$800 million away from our hospitals is your government. If you think that's a source of pride, if you think that's the kind of news that's welcomed by Ontarians, you've got another think coming at the time of the next election.

On Friday, a report was released regarding the financial crisis Ontario hospitals are facing. Ontario hospitals are now facing a total deficit this year of over \$250 million. That's up from \$177 million last year and \$154 million the year before. The important thing in all of this is that patients are paying the price. What this means is that staff are being laid off, those who are left behind are burned out, beds are being cut, services are being reduced. Why is it that you are insisting that Ontario patients pay the price for your mismanagement of Ontario health care?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): To the member opposite, the only government that has cut health spending is the federal government. We have seen the elimination, the slashing, of about \$2.5 billion —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I say, the only government that has slashed health care spending is the federal government. I'm very pleased to say that our government has actually absorbed that slashing and we have also increased health spending from \$17.4 billion to \$18.7 billion. That does not include the \$2 billion that we are adding to the restructuring of our health system.

The Speaker: Answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: We have taken the tough decisions in order that we can strengthen the health system and provide the highest-quality health care necessary. It's because of the inaction of previous governments that we —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: You, your Premier and your policies have done more to promote a loss of confidence in public health care in this province than any government in history. What we're talking about here is an \$800-million cut to Ontario hospitals. That has led to a cut in beds, it has led to a cut in services, it has led to a cut in nursing staff.

A while back you said, "We're going to put \$2 billion into restructuring to help facilitate this process." You have spent \$154 million alone of that \$2 billion, which you are so pleased to announce, and it turns out that \$154 million is only to be used for the purposes of severances for nurses. I can tell you that Ontario patients welcomed that news as well.

Minister, once again, how could you possibly have let things deteriorate to this point in time where we are in Ontario today facing a crisis in health care?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Let me reassure you that what we are doing is ensuring the excellence of the system. We are moving forward to strengthen health services because of the lack of planning and lack of restructuring that had been done. Our system, unfortunately, was not responding to the needs of our population. If the Leader of the Opposition is so committed to improving and continuing to do what we can here in Ontario, he would be well advised to talk to Mr Martin, who is making an economic statement today, and ask him, "Please, put the funding back into the hospitals."

Mr McGuinty: The minister likes to come back to this issue from time to time, to point the finger elsewhere. I have a very simple and very direct question for the minister: Is she prepared to stand up in this House today and admit that health care in Ontario is underfunded on her watch? Is she telling us that there is too little money in health care today in Ontario? Is that what's she's telling us? Because if she's telling us that, I want to know that; I want to hear that admission. The people of Ontario are very anxious to determine why we're facing the kinds of crises like the one we experienced in the greater Toronto area last night. Is that what you're telling us, Minister, that health care in Ontario today, on your watch, at a time when you can afford to give \$5 billion away in a tax cut, is being underfunded?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we have recognized that there is a need to add money to the health system. However, I know you didn't think that was necessary, because you said in September 1996, in the leadership debate: "I am convinced there is enough money in the health system. I don't think we are spending it as effectively as we can." We don't agree with you, and that's why we added money to the system.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is also to the Minister of Health. I have a lot of sympathy; this isn't a good day for you. You've clearly been put off your usual pace by the seriousness of what happened in emergency departments in this city last night; you clearly

have. Frankly, it's quite outrageous that you would stand here today as the minister responsible for health care services and try to blame absolutely everybody else for what is your responsibility. You have presided over the removal of \$800 million from hospitals. Hospitals are where emergency care happens.

What's more, the last time we had this kind of situation, you set up a committee and you discussed — and you tell us today you're discussing it with the hospitals. But you never spent one penny of the \$225 million you so proudly announced to solve the problem.

Then along comes Thanksgiving. You sounded this morning to the reporters as though you didn't know when Thanksgiving was. Long weekends cause emergency line-ups. You're responsible, in a responsible government. What are you going to do?

1400

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): First of all, I think we need to remember that no one is assigning blame. We all have accountability. Everyone needs to work co-operatively in this province to ensure that the patients receive the highest quality of care. That's why this morning we did get the assurance of the hospitals that at no time yesterday were patients at risk. Yes, patients were inconvenienced and patients were waiting. But I was concerned, and that's why we personally reviewed the situation and we determined that no one was at risk. We continue to monitor the situation today.

I would just remind you that the ER task force had recommendations with application to both the hospitals and the Ministry of Health. We told you we would make the money available in October, it would be flowing to the hospitals, and they would —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mrs Boyd: Minister, there have been lots of long weekends since April 20 when you announced this \$225 million. You had the nerve to tell reporters this morning that you couldn't flow the money because of too much paperwork. There was too much paperwork, too much bureaucracy. This famous government that wanted to cut bureaucracy couldn't get the money out before Thanksgiving when it could have been predicted that this problem was going to happen.

Minister, the issue here is standards, standards of care, and your responsibility as the Minister of Health to make sure those standards are the same. You tell us that the hospitals have different standards of care. Whose responsibility is that? Tomorrow we have a bill in front of this House that is designed to set standards and to require the government to provide sufficient funding to meet those standards. Are you going to support that bill tomorrow?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I've had an opportunity to review the bill and I can see that within the bill there are certainly similarities between what you are proposing and what we are preparing. As you know, we will be introducing a patient safety act ourselves this year. We have consulted with the health professionals, particularly the nurses. Of course, this is an issue that is a priority for them.

We need to ensure that we can provide high-quality patient services. We need to have standards within the system. We need to ensure that patients have something akin to a bill of rights, and certainly we would hope that our legislation would be supported by yourself as well.

Mrs Boyd: Minister, you are fast losing whatever trust the people of Ontario had in you as a health minister. You have announced and announced and announced dollars that have not been spent. You stand up here and assure us that no one was at risk. I can assure you that the patients who were run from one hospital to another and couldn't get the care they wanted are not going to be very reassured by that comment and they are not going to be very reassured by the kinds of ridiculous comments you made this morning about how unexpected it would be that there would be a rush on emergency rooms after a long weekend.

This is of long standing. You have had the tools in your hand to change this issue and you have not, and you dare to stand there and say, "We're talking about a patients' bill of rights; we're talking about a patient standards thing," instead of grasping the opportunity to support a bill that would enable you to move forward now.

When can we expect to see your bill come forward, and when can we know what we're actually talking about when you ask us to support something that your government would do when you're running a bunch of MASH units around the province instead of hospitals?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think it's extremely important that we all understand what is meant by "redirect" and all appreciate that what it means is that hospitals implement measures to redirect patients to other facilities to control their increasing ER volume. It is there, if the member does not already know, in order to ensure that the most urgent and the most needy cases are seen in a timely manner. The reality is, the hospitals were doing yesterday everything they possibly could to ensure that those urgent cases were addressed.

We are working co-operatively with the hospitals in order to ensure they have the appropriate support. That's why we've increased funding —

The Speaker: Answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: — to the health system up to \$18.7 billion.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. You will know that within the last couple of hours a member of your own government, the member for Wentworth North, held a news conference where there were serious allegations involving Philip Services and the possibility of unacceptable hazardous materials being dumped into the Taro landfill. As a result of this, I want to ask you to commit to three things today: (1) to a full and expeditious investigation into all these allegations; (2) to call in the OPP to investigate any allegations of criminal involvement. (3) to commit to a public inquiry to ensure that all

the facts that need to be brought out in this very serious matter are done, and done in a transparent way in front of the public.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): We are indeed concerned about the allegations and the matters at the Taro landfill site. I'm happy to mention that Mr Skarica and Mr Doyle have been talking to me on a number of occasions with regard to this matter in the last week or two. It was the result, actually, of Mr Skarica and his consultation with my ministry official that we really got enough information to show discrepancies with regard to what was going on at the site. Therefore, we have at this time launched a full investigation and we are looking into the matter to determine what the facts are. After that we will determine what is the appropriate process.

Mr Christopherson: I'm pleased, of course, as a local member, to hear that you are investigating, but your answer does not go far enough and I don't think you're dealing with this seriously enough.

One of the headlines in today's Stoney Creek News is, "Taro Clipped on Cyanides: Charges Possible After Ministry Caught Unaware Hazardous US Cyanide Sludge Going To East Dump." In addition to your ministry investigation, there are also allegations of possible criminal wrongdoing, and therefore I think you owe it to the public to ensure the OPP are brought in to investigate these allegations.

Lastly, justice not only needs to be done, in terms of the health of our community, but justice needs to be seen to be done. Once again, this issue is big enough and serious enough, involving the health of the citizens of Hamilton-Wentworth, that you have an obligation to commit today that there will be a full public inquiry into this matter. Minister, will you commit to these three requests that I'm making on behalf of the citizens of Hamilton-Wentworth?

Hon Mr Sterling: Of course we will determine what the appropriate process would be in the future after a full investigation takes place. It would, I think, be imprudent to make any promises as to what might be the next step when we don't know all of the facts in relation to this particular matter. I know that my investigation branch will seek the help of the other police forces. They work co-operatively with other police forces when needed. We will do a full, thorough investigation of this, and whatever action has to be taken will be taken to preserve the environment and to preserve what's happening at the Taro landfill site.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Final supplementary.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Minister, this goes much further than you think and that you're indicating today. At the press conference this morning some very serious allegations were made and information revealed, and some of that information suggests that there are likely hazardous wastes going into other dumps across Ontario, not just in Hamilton, that there's no accountability any more, that there are no records, that the testing in Hamilton had been done by the company itself, and that there

are hazardous wastes coming from the United States and going to other dumps.

You have to commit today very seriously to reviewing a hazardous waste document that was supplied to you by the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy on your whole inadequate hazardous waste policy. But most important now, will you commit to a full investigation into what is going on with this self-regulation and hazardous waste going into other dumps across Ontario? Will you commit to that today?

Hon Mr Sterling: As I said, we are taking full action with regard to this particular matter. The manifest system or the system of controlling hazardous waste has not changed since the last administration was there. If this investigation shows that there are problems associated with that, we will address them.

1410

BREAST CANCER

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question to the Minister of Health. We're looking for some more straightforward accountability from you. You know full well that on the emergency issue there was a report that established your government was at fault. That report said October 1996 is when things got worse.

In a similar vein, today is Breast Cancer Awareness Day, and it's very important that there be awareness created because we're sliding in our fight against breast cancer. I want to particularly draw your attention to the standards of the society of radiation oncologists, which says that treatment should take place when radiation treatment is required, and a large part of that is for breast cancer patients; it should be within four weeks. Minister, I hope you're aware that women in this province are waiting as long as 15 weeks to get that treatment. The situation is getting worse.

I want to know, in a very clear-cut fashion — some accountability on your part — what will you do to change that trend and make sure that people do not have excessive waits for breast cancer radiation treatment?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Certainly the issue of breast cancer is one that has been identified as an issue of priority and concern for our government. If you take a look at the additional funding that has been made to the health system, you will see that \$24 million was invested. It was to provide additional breast cancer screening to ensure that the number of deaths in women between the ages of 50 and 69 would be reduced by at least one third.

I can personally assure you that we will continue to do everything we can to make additional dollars available in order that we can continue to provide the breast screening program, to provide the radiation services, in order that we can reduce the number of deaths and provide the appropriate treatment.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, I want to test you on that. Tell us today whether you're going to respond very clearly and take some accountability for the fact that earlier this year

33% of women seeking radiation treatment got it within the four-week standard. It slipped down in August to 26%. What Tom McGowan, the chief radiation oncologist at Cancer Care Ontario, says is that the only way to stop falling behind — we're losing; one more week is being added to the waiting list every three months — is more funding.

Cancer Care Ontario asked you, Minister, not the federal health minister, not somebody in another country, but you, Minister, for more funding, a small increase to be able to do some of that catch-up. They've been waiting since the beginning of the fiscal year. It's now October. We've heard from women experiencing the delay, seeing the nurses not available. I have letters here that I'd be happy to share with you. I want to know just very simply, will you respond to Cancer Care Ontario? Will you provide the funding to reverse the trend and shorten the waiting time for breast cancer radiation treatment?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Perhaps the member is not aware of the fact that we have had dialogue and conversations with Cancer Care Ontario and they know that they are going to be getting the funding that is required in order that those waiting lists can be reduced. They know that.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the minister responsible for children. A groundbreaking study on early childhood education is being released today by the Caledon Institute. In the speech from the throne, your government announced the appointment of world-renowned expert Dr Fraser Mustard. Last week, in the estimates committee, the Minister of Education and Training said how important Dr Mustard's appointment is. You should be aware that Dr Mustard supports early childhood education but also places high value on community schools and parent resource centres. His views are very much in line with the findings of the Caledon Institute, yet your government's funding formula forces the closure of community schools and child care centres and parent resource centres located in them.

Given the pride your government seems to show in appointing Dr Mustard, will you make a commitment today that you will embrace the recommendations of Dr Mustard and make a commitment to implement them and change the funding formula to keep community schools and child care centres open?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): I appreciate very much this question from the member for Algoma. Yes, our government is very pleased with the appointment of Dr Fraser Mustard and the Honourable Margaret McCain, the former Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick, to chair the early years study; actually, the first of this type of study in the history of the province from the perspective of which that group is working.

We are looking forward to the report and their recommendations, which they are proposing to present to us by the end of December. They have, as you know, been

working and meeting since June. From the work they've been doing with the already available research and the people who they are in the midst of consulting, we are looking forward to a very helpful report from that early years study.

Mr Wildman: I find the minister's answer somewhat perplexing in light of statements made by the government and actions taken by the government in the last three and a half years. The Premier once said that full-day early childhood education was "the stupidest recommendation I've ever heard."

The government has made a number of cuts. You've eliminated the early years pilot project of the Ministry of Education and Training. The government made junior kindergarten an optional program and cut funding. The government cancelled the capital program to build new child care centres in schools. The government's new funding formula eliminated future funding for full-day senior kindergarten, which now only serves about 10% of the kindergarten students in the province.

Will the minister make a commitment today to reverse the government's policy of the last three and a half years, promise that the government will reverse the cuts it has already made to early childhood education, and give Ontario families the opportunities they are seeking for their children?

Hon Mrs Marland: The education funding formula which our government announced this year gives school boards the option of providing junior kindergarten or flowing that money into other early learning opportunities, actually up to grade 3. The purpose of having the early years study, and particularly of having it at arm's length from the government, is that we will receive the expert advice from this study. Frankly, for me to pledge anything in terms of policy to you at this point, as the minister for children, would be certainly to prejudice the outcome of the report that we are anticipating from Dr Fraser Mustard and the Honourable Margaret McCain.

TOURISM

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. I've noticed in Niagara that tourism seems to be up significantly. There were record crowds at the Canal Days in Port Colborne and the Marshville Festival in Wainfleet; the Peace Bridge is very busy; the Friendship Festival was well attended; and the wine route in Niagara seems to be becoming increasingly popular.

Tourism, as you know, is a very important component of the economy in Niagara. What is the ministry doing to promote tourism in Ontario, and Niagara in particular, to help tourists take advantage of Ontario's natural attractions?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I would like thank the honourable member for Niagara South for the question. Certainly tourism in Ontario is way up. In fact, in the Niagara area the number of US border crossings was up

5.1% during the first half of 1998 compared to the same period in 1997. Visitors in the Niagara region travel information centres are also up 2.2% during that same time period. Of course, the low dollar is the major contributor to that. But another reason is the fact that our ministry has been working very hard to capitalize on this opportunity and to make sure that everyone in Ontario knows they have a lot more to discover in our great province and that they spend their tourism dollars right here.

1420

Tourism plays a major role in our economy. Our friends across the hall don't seem to agree with that. It employs over 400,000 people. It contributes almost \$14 billion to our economy. Tourism equals jobs — I'd like to have the members of the opposition concur with that — and \$120 million has been put aside, unprecedented in the history of the province, to promote —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Hudak: The minister mentioned \$120 million to help promote Ontario's natural attractions. How is that being targeted to promote tourism, and is there any impact on the Niagara Peninsula in particular?

Hon Mr Palladini: If you have a quality product, you have to market that product. Part of this money has been used to put together tourism ads that you see presently on TV. The fall campaign showcases Niagara's beautiful wine region. These ads will attract Ontarians as well as people who live outside of the province to come and see that Ontario truly has more to discover. Money is also allocated for an events fund, which will be used for development and promotion of festivals and community events throughout the province.

Speaking of festivals, this past weekend I was in Kitchener-Waterloo with my colleagues Gary Leadston, Wayne Wettlaufer and the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer celebrating the 30th year of the Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest, North America's biggest Bavarian festival. Credit must be given to all the volunteers who helped make this a great success. It brings in over 700,000 visitors and contributes over \$18 million to our economy. Tourism is big business. I encourage everyone to come and visit Kitchener-Waterloo and enjoy Oktoberfest; it's wunderbar.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Minister of Education. Your staff confirmed again yesterday that you are not providing any money to heat, light or clean what you have arbitrarily decided are extra spaces in our school system. You cut the funding to maintain those spaces on September 1 even though you have agreed that school boards can't shut down schools to get rid of those extra spaces for at least a year. If the boards don't close schools, they're going to have to find millions of dollars somewhere else to keep the spaces open.

In Hamilton-Wentworth, to take one example, you've decided that there are almost 15,000 supposedly unneeded spaces. The cost of maintaining those spaces, according to your formula, is over \$8 million. That's \$8 million that you have basically stripped from the Hamilton-Wentworth board's budget. You want to claim that you are not forcing boards like Hamilton-Wentworth to close schools. If you want to claim that, will you tell us where you think they should find the \$8 million they would need to keep those so-called extra spaces open?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): What was also confirmed yesterday, through the estimates process, is that the amount of spending through the school system in 1998-99, this school year, will be in the vicinity of \$15 billion, whereas last year it was about \$14.4 billion, which in my way of reckoning, far from being a cut, is actually an increase of about \$600 million that's going to be spent in the schools across Ontario.

It's also interesting to note that in 1989, the last full year the Liberals were in government, the spending in our school system was under \$11 billion. It has gone up considerably in the successive years.

Quite simply, the funding formula allocates, on a fair basis across Ontario, funding for operations and maintenance — gives a little more funding for remote and rural areas, where the cost is higher than in large urban areas — to each board based on the number of students that board accommodates. Then it's up to the boards to determine how they spend that money, which schools stay open and which schools they no longer need.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Minister, you failed to answer the question from the member. Very clearly the situation we have in Hamilton-Wentworth is that, according to the board, 29 schools fall under your magic zone of 70%. Based on their best estimates at this point, based on the figures you have provided, we are now looking at a potential closure of 10 to 15 schools in Hamilton-Wentworth as a result of the formula you have forced upon the boards. It is a cost of \$8 million. You know the boards do not have \$8 million to play with in their budget, so the choice very clearly becomes that either they're going to close these 10 to 15 schools or they're going to have to cut programs so dramatically, to the tune of \$8 million, that they simply cannot function.

These closures are not due to enrolment, not due to the reasons schools have been closed in the past. They're due to this magic formula you have now imposed upon school boards. Minister, will you today guarantee that you will give the \$8 million necessary to the Hamilton public school board to keep these 10 to 15 schools open?

Hon David Johnson: It wasn't too long ago that the Liberals were claiming that 10,000 teachers would be fired in Ontario, and now we all know that's completely wrong. They were wrong then. The Liberals indicated that there would be 10,000 fewer teachers in the province of Ontario. Wrong again. The Liberals have claimed that there would be \$1 billion less spent on education in

Ontario, and we know that's wrong. There will be more money spent on education in Ontario.

Some of the boards have indicated — Thames Valley, for example, was looking at some 20 closings. Now they say there will be no closings. Ottawa has indicated this year that there will be no closings. St Catharines had indicated at one point that there may be some 30 schools closed; now they say that's not so.

School boards, as they had when the Liberals were in power and some 136 schools were closed, in conjunction with their parents and their communities, are making these decisions based on reasonable grounds.

POLICE SERVICES

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): To the Solicitor General: You've been familiar with option 4 policing for a good chunk of time now — back in the spring I talked about it happening down in Niagara when we talked about your so-called safety zones — but you've only just recently become aware of how significant it is. What it's symptomatic of is police forces that are seriously underfunded and that have to send cops out there doing fundraising because they don't have enough resources as a result of your government's downloading, and they find themselves short-staffed with longer and longer response times with greater risk to the community and greater risk to police officers.

When are you going to understand that option 4 policing is about your abandonment of police forces and your government's downloading and your refusal to assist in the proper funding of Niagara Regional Police Service and police forces across this province?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): With respect to the so-called option 4, both the Minister of Transportation and myself have indicated that we have officials taking a look at what's happening in a number of municipalities in the province with respect to this so-called option and taking a look at the kinds of individuals who are being processed. This is one factor.

I know the Minister of Transportation has expressed his concern, as I have, with how this option deals with repeat offenders and the fact that they can avoid the penalties attached with repeat offences going through the justice system. That is a serious concern and we are taking a look at it.

There may be indeed benefits, which we're prepared to consider, with respect to first-time offenders, as there are with other diversion programs. We're quite prepared to look at that sort of approach, but no decisions have been taken.

With respect to commitment to police, I don't think there has been a government in the history of this province that has been so committed to improving policing in Ontario and in this country. Our program to put 1,000 new police officers on the street is a very clear indication of that commitment.

Mr Kormos: You still don't understand what option 4 is all about. Three, four or five police officers at a time are staffing a speed trap, the sole purpose of which is to generate revenues for that particular police force because they've been underresourced by you and your government. These cops don't want to be staffing radar traps. They want to be out there responding to reports of crime and conducting criminal investigations, but criminal investigations are being set aside because police forces, the Niagara Regional Police Service among them, are so seriously underresourced and understaffed.

Option 4 is a symptom of your government's down-loading and your government's abandonment of police forces. Niagara Regional Police is shy 100 officers still; greater and greater response times; increased risk to the welfare of the community, the safety of the community and the health and safety of police officers. Why won't you recognize that that's what option 4 is all about and that it's because of you and your government?

1430

Hon Mr Runciman: If you talk to any serving police officer, they will clearly tell you how ridiculous that kind of accusation is. Serving police officers, men and women across this province, know they have not had a government as strongly supportive of policing in this province as this government sitting here today in Ontario. They can tell you of demonstrations on the lawn not too many years ago, when the NDP government was in power — 10,000 police officers —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Hon Mr Runciman: I do want the extra time, Mr Speaker.

There were 10,000 police officers on the front lawn of Queen's Park complaining about the NDP government, that would not allow their representatives access to the government, while others had clear and easy access.

This government is committed. If you look at the money —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Members for Welland-Thorold and Lake Nipigon, come to order.

Hon Mr Runciman: There's money we've been putting into a whole range of activities in policing: the anti-biker-gang squad, organized gambling, the violent crime linkage analysis system, the upgrade to the DNA labs and 1,000 new police officers on the streets of this province. No government could be more committed to strengthening policing in Ontario and in Canada than the Mike Harris government.

BRUCE GENERATING STATION

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): My question this afternoon is for the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. As you know, the constituents of Bruce are very concerned about the changes affecting that community as a result of changes at Ontario Hydro, most specifically, those related to the Bruce nuclear power development site.

As you know, we've experienced the shutdown of the heavy water plants, we've experienced the closure of Bruce A, and we all know that the refurbishing of Bruce B is underway.

The employees, the businesses and the citizens are concerned about the layoffs and the transfers and the effect this is having on their personal lives and on the economic stability of the community. Could you please give us an update of what Ontario Hydro is doing?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I thank the member for Bruce. I know she cares passionately about the people she represents in the Bruce, and she has done an excellent job in making those representations to this government and to Ontario Hydro. It's paying off for the member and for the people of her community. Ontario Hydro recently issued its new nuclear report card for the Bruce. Although progress was slightly behind schedule, the report card looks better than ever we've seen in the history of Bruce nuclear.

There's much work to be done, but the progress that has been made to date has been exceptional. The credit goes not only to the honourable member but to the people she represents, the employees of Ontario Hydro, who have done a tremendous job of laying up the heavy water, refurbishing units that needed to be brought up to speed there and operating four of the units that continue to operate there. Some 2,950 staff remain at the Bruce station to assist with the layups of units 1 to 5 and the decommissioning, and to operate units 5 to 8; 210 staff are working on improvement projects; and 530 employees have to relocate, and we're helping them to relocate.

Mrs Fisher: Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that. It is an update with regard to Ontario Hydro. I was wondering if you could expand a little bit on what Ontario Hydro and the government are doing for the community at large with respect to these layoffs.

Hon Mr Wilson: As the honourable member knows, because she has been actively involved in the community consultations, about 300 people have participated in 15 consultations to date. The community, through such organizations as the Bruce Community Development Corp and the Impact Advisory Committee, is working very hard, with financial assistance from my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Honourable Noble Villeneuve. Some \$250,000 was given to the community.

I understand from the honourable member, who gave me an update just yesterday, that the final strategic planning document should be ready by mid-October. The vision for that community will be set forward, and how it diversifies its economic base. The government will respond appropriately to recommendations where we can, I assure the honourable member.

In the interim, Ontario Hydro has met its commitments to the Bruce nuclear energy centre by providing a stable supply of low-cost steam until the year 2003, something they had sought under previous governments for many years and never got.

Ontario Hydro has also lowered the cost of electricity to that area, to the Bruce Energy Centre, in the hope of attracting more businesses to create more employment in that area. I want to thank again the employees of Ontario Hydro for their co-operation in this.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. To follow up on the press conference that occurred this morning with regard to the Taro site, there were clearly some very serious concerns raised, some very serious allegations raised, as to what was being dumped, particularly in relation to hazardous waste, at that site, potentially affecting the health and well-being of the residents in that area.

What came through very clearly is this: This information was obtained by citizens who were able to get the manifest from the American side of the border of what was being brought into Canada and what potentially was going to that site. Your ministry was not aware of what was going on at this site until you were advised by the citizens and representatives of that community that they had these documents from the United States. You had no mechanism for inspecting what was going to that site. You had no mechanism for controlling what was going to that site. You had no mechanism for ensuring that what was coming over the border was then matching what was going into that. You were asleep at the switch; your ministry was asleep at the switch.

Can you tell me how you, as Minister of the Environment, responsible for the environment in Ontario, did not know the discrepancy that was going on and clearly allowed this potential hazard to slip through the cracks of your ministry?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): As I mentioned before, this matter is under full investigation. The member opposite should know of course that transboundary transportation of hazardous waste is a federal responsibility.

Mr Agostino: I just cannot believe the arrogance of that answer of yours. Very clearly we have a very serious situation here. Very clearly the allegations have to be investigated; I understand that. What doesn't have to be investigated is clear: that your ministry does not have in place either at Taro or any other site across Ontario a mechanism for inspecting what goes into the landfill sites. You simply allow self-monitoring. You rely on the company providing you with the information and you do not have in place any checks or balances as the Minister of the Environment to check that the information is accurate and that material going to the site is what should be in there and not hazardous waste.

That has nothing to do with the federal government. That has nothing to do with all the investigations being carried on. It is a system you have in place because you have cut your staff by 40%, because you no longer have

inspectors, you no longer have the staff to follow through and monitor.

Can you tell me specifically what steps your ministry took at that site to inspect the material that was going in and certify that it was meeting the criteria in the certificate of approval?

Hon Mr Sterling: As I mentioned before to the previous member who asked this question, the manifest system that is in place now with the present government is the same manifest system that was there in the previous government. There are checks and balances within the system. There were in fact people at the Taro landfill site who were checking these particular manifests.

I might add that this matter was brought to the attention of Mr Skarica and Mr Agostino and Mr Christopherson back in May. It was Mr Skarica who took real action to find out what was happening. He's the MPP who took action on behalf of the people of Hamilton-Wentworth. He's the reason this got to the attention of my staff. My staff, once they received solid information, took immediate action, called a complete investigation, and we are going to get to the bottom of this.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

1440

HOMELESSNESS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): My question is to the Minister responsible for children's issues. You are the one who is supposed to be taking care of the children of this province. You ought to be concerned with your government's pathetic response to homelessness. Nineteen per cent of Toronto's homeless are children under 16.

Your government can blame the federal government, you can blame the kids, you can slink away by saying that the issue of homelessness is too complex, you can shelter yourself by saying you provide millions for shelters, but without a home the homeless cannot begin to deal with other problems. At some point, you have got to acknowledge that you need to invest provincial dollars in housing those kids. Tell us that you care enough to do it.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): I will refer this to the minister responsible for housing.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister of Housing.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): To the member opposite, and congratulations on —

The Speaker: You said to me this is to the minister responsible for housing.

Hon Mrs Marland: Mr Speaker, I didn't finish. The Minister for Community and Social Services is responsible for this area of housing.

The Speaker: Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I was looking forward to my colleague's answer.

This is indeed a very serious issue and we recognize that as one of the reasons why we established a task force that consulted with municipalities and with agencies which deal with people who find themselves homeless —

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Margaret, you are not a receptionist, you are a minister.

The Speaker: Member for Windsor-Sandwich, come to order, please. Thank you.

Hon Mrs Ecker: — so that we could improve what this province is doing to support families and those who find themselves homeless, in co-operation with the federal government and in co-operation with our municipal partners.

That's why we've increased the spending we have available for supports for people who find themselves in homeless situations. That's why we are working so diligently to get families off welfare. We've had great success in doing that. There are 133,000 fewer children who are stuck on welfare today than there were three years ago. That is very much a good-news story. We've increased funding for the mental health supports for individuals on the street who need that, and there are a number of other steps we have done to spend that \$100 million — it will be \$104 million actually because we will be increasing funding for these supports.

We recognize they are very important. We've listened very carefully to what the municipalities have told us about this. They need resources, but they also need those resources in a more flexible manner. It's a message we've heard loudly and clearly. That will be another step in —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Marchese: You could see through that referral that they don't have a clue who the Minister of Housing is, and neither do we, frankly, on this side. I've got to tell you, this is another example of how your government isn't just going too far, too fast. It's going in the wrong direction.

You have given a tax cut to the wealthiest people, but you think housing homeless children is just too expensive. You try to shove the responsibility on to municipalities while downloading \$600 million in costs to them. You hope that the private sector will jump in, but you're the only people in the province who think they will.

Minister, which is better, taking back the tax cut from a few wealthy people and housing those 19% of the children or letting them keep the tax cut and putting the kids in motels? Which do you think is more important?

Hon Mrs Ecker: One of the things we think is very important is if someone has a job, and if someone is in a low-income job, for example, the last thing the government should be doing is going to that person and saying: "Oh, gee, congratulations. Let's take some more of that money for taxes." If the honourable member would like us to take the 655,000 low-income individuals who no longer have to pay Ontario income tax and add them back to the tax rolls, perhaps he should say so. If he would like us to take the 41% tax break that we've given families in

low-income circumstances and increase their taxes 41%, perhaps he should say that.

We recognize that families are better off working. That's why our economic reforms, our education reforms and our welfare reforms are helping those families get into those jobs, and then we're letting them keep more of that money because they know what to do with that money better to help their children than a government bureaucracy created by the honourable member across the way.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order to request unanimous consent for a statement for Breast Cancer Awareness Day, because breast cancer affects eventually one in nine women in Ontario.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent for a statement right now? An all-party statement?

Mr Kennedy: An all-party statement.

The Speaker: Agreed? No.

PETITIONS

FATHERS

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): "Whereas children need the unfettered presence, care, and love of their fathers, and fathers want to have, care for and nurture their children after marriage breakdown as well as before; and

"Whereas marital separation is the end of the conjugal and financial relationship between a father and mother; and

"Whereas fathers experience misandry in the family courts of Ontario and other institutions which is depriving them of their children and subjugating them financially; and

"Whereas statutory recognition of these facts will reduce the burden of legal costs on families and the government, eliminate fatherlessness, cut down on self-destructive behaviour by separated fathers, reduce violence, and produce healthier and happier children with a greater sense of belonging and commitment to society;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, petition the Parliament of Ontario to pass legislation:

"To ensure that no father is deprived against his will of the opportunity to fully and completely parent his children regardless of the father's marital status (unless the father has put the children's welfare at risk and all available alternatives have been exhausted); and furthermore,

"To ensure that no father who is willing to care for his child is required to pay for the cost of child care provided by his child's mother when the child is under her care and not his care (unless the father has put the child's welfare at risk and all available alternatives have been exhausted), in particular for the cost of food, clothing and shelter."

I have affixed my signature in full agreement with this petition.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to draw your attention to standing order

59(e) and today's proceedings. You will note that scheduled for today in the House is debate on the time allocation motion on Bill 55, and at the same time in the standing committee on estimates we have scheduled debate of the estimates of the Ministry of Education and Training. Under rule 59(e) it states, "No estimates shall be considered in the committee while any matter relating to the same policy field is being considered in the House."

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Let me just give you a couple of quick points before you go on.

First of all, can I get some order from the members, back here especially. If you have a meeting, why don't you do it outside. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Lincoln and two ministers.

First off, I don't know what's to be called; it says "TBA" to me. Until it's called, I don't know.

Secondly, the standing committee on estimates has been cancelled.

Mr Windman: OK, that's fine.

1450

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have further petitions regarding the closing of the Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital.

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned citizens of Hamilton and the surrounding communities, beg leave to petition the government of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission has announced the closure of Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario through the Health Services Restructuring Commission is divesting its responsibility for mental health care without hearing from the community first; and

"Whereas community-based mental health care providers will bear the brunt of this ill-fated decision by being forced to meet what is sure to be an increased demand for their services; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is not adequately monitoring community-based mental health services for their effectiveness, efficiency or whether they're even delivering the agreed-upon programs in the first place according to the 1997 annual report of the Provincial Auditor; and

"Whereas the community pays the price for cuts to mental health care;

"Therefore we, the citizens of Hamilton and area who care about quality, accessibility and public accountability in mental health care for all Ontarians, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately set aside all recommendations to divest and/or close Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital and the programs and services it provides; and

"Further, to call for full hearings to seek community solutions to community issues and to democratically decide the future of mental health care for the citizens of Hamilton area."

I proudly add my name in continuing support to these petitioners.

ABORTION

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 103 people.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Windsor-Essex county was the first community to undergo hospital restructuring; and

"Whereas the community supported the recommendations of the Win-Win report based on a funding model that included the expansion of community-based care; and

"Whereas recent reports estimate that Windsor-Essex hospital expenditure is underfunded by approximately \$122 per person; and

"Whereas this represents the lowest funding per capita for hospital services of any community in Ontario with a population of over 200,000; and

"Whereas hospitals across the province have been forced to further reduce expenditures 18%; and

"Whereas these cuts have forced hospitals to eliminate emergency services in the west end of Windsor and other desperately needed services; and

"Whereas the minister acknowledged that additional funding was necessary in high-growth areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Minister of Health to provide the appropriate level of funding to hospitals in Windsor-Essex which would allow Windsor Regional Hospital to provide urgent care services for the west end and restore equitable health care funding across Windsor and Essex county."

I add my name to this petition.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Harris government's 'downloading' to municipal taxpayers is directly responsible for the \$36.3-million shortfall to the region of Hamilton-Wentworth; and

"Whereas the Harris government 'downloading' is directly responsible for creating a property tax crisis in our region; and

"Whereas the Harris government, while boasting about its 30% tax cut which benefits mainly the wealthy, is making hard-working families, seniors, homeowners and businesses pay the price with outrageous property tax hikes and user fees for services; and

"Whereas city and regional councillors are being unfairly blamed and forced to explain these huge tax hikes," — and I would point out that Councillor Gerry Copps is in the public gallery today — "Hamiltonians know that what's really going on is that they are being forced to pay huge property tax increases to fund Harris's 30% tax giveaway to the rich; and

"Whereas homeowners, including seniors and low-income families, are facing huge property tax increases ranging from several hundred to thousands of dollars; and

"Whereas the Harris government 'downloading' has led to huge property tax increases for business that will force many small and medium-sized businesses in Hamilton-Wentworth to close or leave the community, putting people out of work; and

"Whereas Hamilton-Wentworth region is proposing that the Harris government share in the costs of an expanded rebate program, worth about \$3 million region-wide;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Harris government immediately eliminate the \$38-million downloading shortfall that is devastating and angering homeowners as well as killing businesses in Hamilton-Wentworth."

I continue to support my constituents by signing this.

SCHOOL PRAYERS

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): I have a petition for the government of Ontario.

"The Grand Orange Lodge of Ontario, being a firm supporter of the public system and the Protestant faith, does with the undersigned hereby petition the government of Ontario to reinstate the Lord's Prayer in the public school system of Ontario."

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Sudbury Regional Palliative Care Association announced at its annual general membership

meeting on October 13, 1998, that it must, regretfully, close its doors; and

"Whereas the Sudbury Regional Palliative Care Association has announced that this action is necessary due to a lack of financial resources; and

"Whereas, unless adequate funding is secured immediately, services currently available from this organization will cease effective December 31, 1998; and

"Whereas because of the lack of financial commitment from the Mike Harris government, many more long-term care providers throughout Ontario have and will continue to cease their services;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to recognize the valued work provided by the Sudbury Regional Palliative Care Association, and furthermore, that the Minister of Long-Term Care commit the required financial assistance to ensure that this organization continues to provide the necessary palliative care services to the residents of the Sudbury region, as well as to all Ontarians."

I sign my name to this petition.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Up in the spectators' gallery, on the opposition side, is Jessica Mulley, a committee clerk from Westminster. We'd like to welcome her. She's sitting next to Donna Bryce; of course everyone knows her. Welcome.

ABORTION

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 55 people.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

LEGAL AID

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Paul Bernardo is a convicted murderer and is currently serving a life sentence for the murders of teenagers Kristen French and Leslie Mahaffy; and

"Whereas there is concrete evidence in the form of videotapes that Mr Bernardo, along with his ex-wife,

Karla Homolka, held their victims captive prior to murdering them; and

"Whereas despite this concrete evidence the Ontario Court of Appeal has ruled that Mr Bernardo may secure a publicly funded lawyer to file for an appeal of his murder convictions; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers will therefore pay for Mr Bernardo's lawyer and court appeal;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to encourage the federal government to amend the Criminal Code such that Ontario taxpayers are not required to pay for legal appeals initiated by convicted felons."

I've also signed the petition.

1500

ADOPTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I'm pleased to present a petition that was given to me by Rik Davies and his wife, Linda, with respect to adoption issues.

"Whereas the Adoption Reform Coalition of Ontario (ARCO) brings together various organizations to recommend reform of Ontario adoption law based on honesty, openness and integrity;

"Whereas existing adoption secrecy legislation is outdated and unjust;

"Whereas Canada has ratified standards of civil and human rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; these rights are denied to persons affected by secrecy provisions in adoption laws of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts in Ontario;

"Whereas 20% of persons in Ontario are directly or indirectly affected by restricted rights to personal information available to other citizens;

"Whereas the adopted person's right to his/her birth identity is rooted in a basic and fundamental human need;

"Whereas most birth parents did not ask for lifelong confidentiality; it was imposed upon them involuntarily;

"Whereas research shows that not knowing basic personal information has proven harmful to adopted persons, birth parents, adoptive parents and other birth relatives;

"Whereas research in other countries has shown that unqualified access to information in adoption satisfies the overwhelming majority of the parties involved;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to enact revision of the Child and Family Services Act" as follows.

I'm pleased to sign my name to this.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition sent to me by June Huston, the president of the Pass Lake Historical Society, and I'm grateful she sent it to me. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas heritage is vitally important to the social and economic health of Ontario communities and Ontario residents; and

"Whereas community museums, galleries and heritage organizations work hard to protect, promote, manage and develop our provincial heritage resources; and

"Whereas the provincial government has a responsibility to the people of Ontario to promote the value of heritage and heritage conservation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has abdicated their responsibility for heritage by cutting support to community museums, galleries and heritage organizations; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has not implemented a new heritage act that would give communities the ability to better protect heritage sites; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has not undertaken meaningful consultation with Ontario's heritage community;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide stronger support to Ontario's heritage institutions and organizations and to work with the people of Ontario to establish a new heritage act."

I'm very pleased to sign this petition as well.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I move that pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 55, An Act to revise the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act, when Bill 55 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the standing committee on general government;

That no deferral of the second reading vote pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted;

That the standing committee on general government shall be authorized to meet for one day at its regularly scheduled meeting time for the purposes of public hearing organization;

That the standing committee on general government shall be authorized to meet to consider the bill at any time during its regularly scheduled meeting times as deemed necessary by the committee and for four days during the November recess;

That, pursuant to standing order 74(d), the Chair of the standing committee on general government shall establish the deadline for the tabling of amendments or for filing them with the clerk of the committee;

That the committee be authorized to meet for a further two days, one day of which may fall on a day other than a

regular meeting day of the committee, for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and that the committee be authorized to meet beyond its normal hour of adjournment on the final day until completion of clause-by-clause consideration;

That, at 4:30 pm on the final day designated by the committee for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill and not later than November 26, 1998, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill, and any amendments thereto. Any divisions required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a);

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than the first sessional day that reports from committees may be received following the completion of clause-by-clause consideration or not later than November 30, 1998, whichever is earliest. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the date provided, the bill shall be deemed to have been passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported and received by the House;

That upon receiving the report of the standing committee on general government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That two hours shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At the end of such time the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That the vote on third reading of the bill may, at the request of any chief whip of a recognized party in the House, be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding "Deferred Votes"; and

That in the case of any division relating to any proceeding on the bill, the divisional bell shall be limited to five minutes.

Mr Speaker, I'm going to share my time today with the members for Guelph, Simcoe East and Middlesex, and consequently restrict my comments because I did have the opportunity to speak at the second reading of the bill.

I am looking forward to the public hearings. The ministry has been in consultation with many of the stakeholders over a period of the better part of two years now, and in that regard I would particularly like to note the efforts of the member for Middlesex, who has played quite a key role in assisting the government to bring the apprenticeship legislation current.

Members of the House by now will know that the current legislation we have is dated I believe 1964, well over 30 years old, at a time when conditions were considerably different. Governments, through those succeeding years, have not had the time or the opportunity to bring the apprenticeship legislation up to date, yet we live in a

whole new world as we approach the 21st century, the new millennium.

There are many demands for new trades. Cable networking is one example of a recent trade that has come upon us. In agriculture there are new trades being developed. In all walks of life in the province of Ontario there are requirements for new skills and new trades to keep current with the economy again as we approach the 21st century.

I am delighted that through the public hearing process we will be talking about ways and means that the various industries — by industries I mean those people who may be concerned with the tool and die trades, for example, and machinists, cooks and bakers, or any number of skilled trades we have in the province. The people associated with those particular trades, the workers, the employers, will have a stake in defining the standards, in determining what makes sense within their industry.

These are people who have knowledge born from experience. They will assist us not only in terms of setting standards but also in terms of marketing, if you will, their particular trades, because there are just so many opportunities for our young people. Many of our young people, of course, go to post-secondary education, whether it's college or university, and many other people go into the workforce. As a matter of fact, over half the young people coming up would migrate directly to the workforce from secondary school as opposed to going to university or college.

1510

There are many opportunities in the trades, and unfortunately there's a shortage in many trades of skilled workers. I think I recounted my experience of visiting an automotive parts manufacturer in Newmarket and being told, and this was earlier this year, that the business was booming, that they had many orders, but they were unable to accept all the orders they were receiving because they simply did not have the skilled workers required to fulfill those orders and, as a result, some of the staff were being asked to do a good deal of overtime because there was a shortage.

There's good news and bad news when you do overtime. Some people find the time requirements onerous, but then of course they're being paid for it, and some of them, I think four of them, earned over \$100,000 last year as a result of all the overtime they put in. All power to them, and I think it's wonderful to see people coming through the trades making that sort of money, but at the same time it points out that there is a shortage and that this particular company was experiencing that shortage and needed more skilled workers to fulfill all the orders coming their way.

That is true in other industries as well, but it seems in the automotive industry it's most pronounced. In the automotive industry a good percentage of those in the skilled trades have been there for many years, and there's one statistic that about 40% of those involved in the automotive trades will be retiring within the next five or

six years. That's going to leave a tremendous void, a void that we need to come to grips with.

As a Legislature and as a government, we need to put in place training procedures, various steps, so that young people will understand the wonderful career opportunities that are there in the skilled trades, and if they have the interest and the ability, they will find no impediments to achieving the skills necessary to participate in that way.

That's what this bill does. That's what the bill that's before us today that we have unfortunately had to time-allocate —

Interjection: Why is that unfortunate?

Hon David Johnson: Because we've had three good days of debate and there is no sign from the opposition parties that they're prepared to allow this to proceed. You would think that after 30 years the opposition parties would understand that some action needs to be taken, but unfortunately they haven't yet come to that conclusion. The opposition parties, you would think, would want the general public and the various stakeholders to be able to be involved in public hearings, but yet they stall it. After 30 years they stall it here in the House. They stall the public hearings.

We're intent that those public hearings go ahead and that's what we've done today, introduced the time allocation motion that will allow those public hearings to proceed so we can hear from the stakeholders and allow the legislation to proceed so we can get on with revitalizing the whole apprenticeship system and encourage more young people — people of all ages, frankly, but more young people in particular — to have the opportunity, a wonderful opportunity, in the trades and bring Ontario up into the 21st century as we approach that 21st century.

I'm pleased to kick off the debate with just those few general comments, and I know that our members for Guelph, Simcoe East and Middlesex will have a good deal more to say as well.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): It's my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 55. For those who are viewing, this bill is entitled An Act to revise the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act.

To begin, I think it's important to note we had really good news in our constituency office yesterday. The Statistics Canada figures arrived for unemployment and, once again, we had smiles on our faces because in Guelph our unemployment rate is down to 6.4%.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): That's very good.

Mrs Elliott: Yes, it is really good news. It's well below the provincial average of 7.3% and of course Ontario is doing very well, below the national average of 8.2%.

Due to our economic policies, our low-tax policies, our incentives for small business, a whole series of initiatives that we've undertaken since we've become government, we have definitely helped Ontario become the place to invest and to create jobs and we are seeing that. In the last month, 85% of the jobs created in Canada happened right here in Ontario.

I talk about jobs because the prospect for growth and for economic well-being in this province is very positive, and skilled trades is one of the areas where we expect economic growth to be very significant. These jobs come through, for the most part, apprenticeship training. Our workforce here in Ontario is world-renowned and we want to make sure and make every effort that that stays that way.

The jobs that come through skilled trades and as a result of apprenticeship provide very challenging work and a very positive career. Top performers in the skilled trades earn very good salaries. I'm told by the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association that, with a bonus, a leading tool and die maker can make between \$40,000 and \$90,000 a year.

The other thing that's interesting about the kinds of jobs these apprenticeships lead to is that the jobs, the trades, the work is interesting. My understanding is that electricians, for instance, are learning to wire smart houses, or those involved in auto service technician work learn how and are re-educated as new types of computerized vehicles and parts and so on come on to the market. These are the kinds of jobs that are interesting, well paying and highly desirable.

We're in a province where jobs are being created, where the economic prospect is very bright. Why is this government introducing this legislation? Well, I come from the area of Guelph, part of the Golden Triangle, the technology triangle, and I've met with my chamber of commerce, I've met with representatives of companies like Blount, like Guelph Tool and Die, like W.C. Wood. They tell me that they have been faced with difficulty in finding skilled workers.

There is also a demographics problem at work here. We have more and more skilled workers close to retirement. In the auto parts industry, for instance, more than 70% of the present workforce is over the age of 40. Many workers in refrigeration and air conditioning trades are also close to retirement. It's not just a new problem. I can remember representatives from Linamar indicating that they have, on more than one occasion, been forced to leave the province to find skilled workers.

We take this very seriously in our government and we know that it's important to undertake change to make sure that we have the kind of skilled workers this province needs and wants. We know that it's important to help our employers keep pace with change, and that highly skilled workers attract investment and are well able to take their place in this world with good jobs and take care of their families.

I'm very pleased to stand in the House today in support of Bill 55. I think this is a bill that will directly benefit the young people in my community and all across this province, because it is going to help create an updated apprenticeship training system and, as the minister stated a few moments ago, will replace 30-year-old legislation that doesn't reflect the modern challenges of today's economy.

When I was doing some preparatory work for these remarks today, I was very interested to learn that 50% of

the students graduating from high school go directly into the workforce. That was surprising to me. For some reason, I naturally assumed that more students went on to post-secondary education than that. But I think it's very important to recognize that fact because it's to these people that apprenticeship is particularly important, and it's a large number of our students to whom we are speaking through this legislation today. Some 13% of our young people are looking for work. Many of them might not be aware of what kind of apprenticeship training is available, where it's available, and they may not know what a good career it can lead to. They also may not realize how many employers are looking for good workers to train.

Our job as a responsible government is to ensure that Ontarians have the right training and that they are able to hold the highly skilled jobs our economy needs to expand.

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The legislation is old, as I said. It's due for an overhaul. The fact is that some ministries have been well served, such as the high quality of training in the construction industry, but the reality is that apprenticeship training isn't just about the construction industry. Manufacturers train apprentices. In the automotive service and repair business, apprenticeships occur. In the expanding tourism industry, for instance, which relies on skilled workers such as chefs, cooks, bakers, in all of those areas, apprentices are trained. Of course, particularly important for my area, the Guelph-Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge area, high-tech industries definitely require apprentices because the work is so highly skilled and complicated.

One-size-fits-all legislation, a one-size-fits-all approach to training, doesn't work, and that has been the approach of the current act that needs to be reformed. The skills are too demanding, the needs from various groups are too demanding and too diverse, and I believe the legislation that's being proposed does in fact do this much better.

Not only must apprenticeships be able to serve the needs of the all-important apprentices who are undertaking this challenge, but they also need to speak to the needs of the employers. They have to be able to extend to new jobs when these young people are trained. They have to be able to adapt to new industries as they develop. I mentioned earlier new car manufacturers constantly bringing out different computerized parts. I guess the word I'm thinking of here that must fit and does fit into this new legislation is "flexibility" for apprenticeships.

Apprenticeship is a very effective way of providing training in the workplace. It is driven by not only the workers but the employers and the unions, and it provides real-life training for apprentices. For those who may not know a lot about apprenticeship, I would just indicate that it provides on-the-job training. Apprentices attend classroom training at colleges or at recognized training providers to further their skills. Some 75% to 90% of apprenticeship training takes place on the job, and classroom instruction ranges from 10% to 25% as part of the training.

An apprentice becomes a skilled worker once he or she has completed the training requirements in the provincial standard for that trade. There are over 200 apprenticeship trades in Toronto: 67 trades have a specific regulation, and in 30 of these an apprentice is eligible to be certified to work in any province or territory in Canada.

In this legislation, and by virtue of the fact that we have brought it forward, we are indicating to the people of Ontario that we see apprenticeship as being very important and essential to developing a flexible, highly skilled and modern workforce for this province.

The systems in the legislation today are simply too rigid. Bill 55, if passed by this House — I'm assuming that it will be — puts quality and safety first. It encourages more employers to train. It gives employers and workers more responsibility for training. It creates a flexible training system to meet the needs of more industries and eliminates red tape.

The thing that's interesting to me about Bill 55, which I didn't know before I became familiar with this, is that it doesn't talk about wages. Collective agreements are the places where wages should properly be set for apprenticeships. For instance, in the construction industry the collective agreements do put in the hands of the employer and the workers greater responsibility.

Apprenticeship has been with us for a very long time. It began in Europe centuries ago. I guess — what is the old line? — practice makes perfect. People have realized that on-the-job training, learning from the masters, is a very effective way, and it has been part of our work culture actually since Upper Canada was established, in the 1700s and 1800s. It has lasted not only here in Ontario and in Canada but in Europe before that because it was effective.

I was interested to know that in 1998 there are 48,600 apprentices working for more than 26,000 employers here in Ontario and that means there are also 517,000 certified skilled workers in our workforce. This is a very significant workforce and it's a very significant group of people that in our daily life we probably forget about but that we must rely on every single day.

I am pleased to be able to stand in the House today to support this legislation. As I said earlier, I think this legislation will help young people who are entering the workforce, not only in my riding but in ridings all across this province. I think it will help ensure the potential of apprenticeship training into the new century that we are facing.

I think it's very important that through this legislation we will help create a new generation of skilled workers. Those workers are needed to keep our economy strong and to help it grow. I think the track record our government has had in helping the province of Ontario get back on track and get back on its feet is very strong. This legislation is a piece that will strengthen this initiative and I am very pleased to stand in the House today and support Bill 55.

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): I am very pleased to have the opportunity today to rise and speak on Bill 55. It's something that over the years I have really

been concerned about and have really wanted to happen. Finally, today, we have the chance to get up and to discuss it.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to address the compelling need to bring skills and people together and to create greater employment opportunities in this province of Ontario. If Ontario's industries are to be competitive on the world market, we must have a skilled labour pool to meet industrial and technical needs. I believe Bill 55, An Act to revise the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act, will build Ontario's labour pool through workplace apprenticeship programs.

The formal certification will expand opportunities for Ontario workers and increase the competitiveness of Ontario businesses. We know Ontarians want to work, we know many ambitious young Ontarians want to work in a skilled trade and we know that apprenticeship training can and does meet the needs of both employers and employees.

Apprenticeship programs need to be adjusted and restructured to meet society's requirements. Our labour force deserves the skills and technology training to give them a career in construction, industry, service and automotive power.

Earlier this year, the Minister of Education and Training, my colleague Dave Johnson, announced funding which enables an apprentice to obtain a loan to cover the cost of equipment and tools for their chosen trade. Our future labour force can now invest in their own future.

With the passing of this bill, Ontario will establish a stronger role for industry in our apprenticeship program. Youth unemployment is being recognized by this government. We are addressing the situation with creative and innovative programs that will not just employ our youth, but give them a lifelong career.

We recognize many employers are desperate to hire skilled workers. I have seen this first hand in my own riding. We know we must bring our employers to the table, we know we must bring our unemployed youth to the table and we know we have to bring our secondary school system also to the table.

We have consulted with stakeholders. Together we have found a solution. We are reforming our secondary school system and with Bill 55 we are revamping our apprenticeship training system, giving industry a stronger role. We are introducing a new funding strategy to ensure apprentices can access quality training. We are developing a win-win system for Ontario students.

In my riding of Simcoe East, Georgian College accepts referrals to the college from the field consultants of the apprenticeship branch of the Minister of Education and Training. Depending on the trade, the apprentice receives in-school training over two or three years, attending school for blocks of time which vary from eight to 15 weeks each year, or for one day each week for 40 weeks.

At the Owen Sound campus, Mike Trainer, director-manager of corporation contract and apprenticeship training, explained how he and his staff went out into the community to hear the needs of employers. Mr Trainer stressed how important it is for educators to find a way to

plug into a community and to be responsive to the community's employers' needs.

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Bill 55 will guarantee a system that is more responsive to technological innovations, changing labour market requirements and ever-evolving training needs. According to a 1998 Angus Reid survey, we will need 30% more skilled tradespeople and technologists in the next 10 years. Apprenticeship programs will have a positive impact on current and projected workforce shortages.

In the fall of 1997, the Industrial Research and Development Institute in Midland formed a working partnership with Georgian College and became a national leader in automotive studies. My colleagues the member for Mackenzie-York, Mr Klees, and Mr Wilson and Mr Tascona were at the announcement of that \$3.8 million that Minister Eves announced in the last financial statement here to go towards that very project. I was so thrilled to be there at that Georgian College site on that day when that announcement was made, because I firmly believed over the years that the 32 community colleges in this province were to be zeroed in on for skills development and skills training whereby we would train our own workforce. Other countries in the world have been doing this for years. Finally, we are now going to do it, long overdue.

I commend Minister Johnson for bringing this legislation forward so that our own people will be trained here in this community. This partnership will produce graduates with expertise in automotive manufacturing, auto parts design and tool and die skills. There are some 27 facilities in the county of Simcoe that are producing parts for the automotive industry.

I've toured the plant of Barrie Welding in Barrie, where they had robots from the Honda plant in Alliston that they were modifying in our own plant in Barrie. That industry has expanded something unbelievable with the technology we have today. To be repairing robots in the city of Barrie was really amazing to me. That company has gone from fewer than 50 employees to approximately 175 employees today.

There are a lot of things taking place with regard to tool and die and skills. The four people who own that company bring in people in the summertime, students from high school, and they work and put in their time and within three years after they're done school they are full-class tool and die makers, making in the area of \$65,000 to \$85,000 a year. But they work hard, and they've had the experience and training from the people who own that company. I think that is a major plus for what's happening here, and Bill 55 is going to expand on that across the province.

Reinhart Weber of Midland, the founder of the institute that I was just mentioning that's in partnership with Georgian College, knows the value of apprenticeship programs. Mr Weber has been building and strengthening the skills workforce at Weber Tool and Mold since 1960.

Georgian College's hospitality and tourism program offers food preparation and cook apprenticeships as well as general carpentry, millwright and welder fitter. The

Sundial restaurant in Orillia is one of many businesses that has contributed and benefited from the hospitality program for many years. The Georgian College programs and the Owen Sound program in particular have tripled in the past three years. For example, Hobart Food Equipment has a total workforce of 200 and recognizes the apprenticeship program as an investment in their own future. Hobart is paying to train 14 employees through the Georgian College program today.

Apprenticeship programs are important not only in Ontario cities but also in our rural areas. When asked what he attributes the great success of the Owen Sound program to, Mr Trainer explained, "A survey among the students revealed they were taking the local apprenticeship course because it didn't interrupt their family life, they didn't have to travel many miles to Toronto and they could afford to continue the skills training while looking after their families in their rural Ontario hometown."

To me, these comments reveal that by updating and strengthening the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act through Bill 55, we are building and strengthening our families and our communities. This kind of strength is stronger than any forged steel. This kind of strength will take our province into 2000 and beyond, with a predictable future of employment for everyone. This kind of strength will expand opportunities for all Ontarians. This kind of strength will give my grandchildren an Ontario to be proud of.

Bill 55 offers a practical alternative for our young people who want to enter the workforce. They will develop the skills that are in demand. We will know they are in demand through the establishment of committees composed of representatives of employers and employees in different occupations. These committees are the eyes, ears and voices of our communities.

The goal of Bill 55 is to double the number of apprentices from 11,000 to some 22,000. Apprenticeship laws have not been updated for over 30 years. These changes are long overdue and will bring our apprenticeship laws up to date. Bill 55 will encourage more industry, labour and business involvement in setting apprenticeship policy.

In supporting Bill 55, we are seeing, we are listening and, most importantly, we are acting. This action has been long overdue. I can't stress that enough, because we are importing workers from other parts of the world when we should be training our own people in this province to do those jobs that are out there and that are needed.

I say amen to a bill that has been well-thought-out. I'm sorry we have to bring closure on the opposition to get this bill through the Legislature. I would have thought every member of this Legislature would have enthusiastically endorsed this legislation.

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): I'm pleased to join my colleagues from Guelph and Simcoe East in debate on the motion before us today and to compliment them on their comments this afternoon. I know in particular the member for Simcoe East routinely raises the issue of apprenticeship initiatives, whether it's at the post-secondary level or at the secondary school level, where he has been

responding to issues of concern and opportunity with respect to new opportunities within the skilled trades field.

I too want to speak in support of the motion this afternoon and re-emphasize some of the central themes to Bill 55 as we discuss that this afternoon, as we deal with the motion that would not only take us to deal with the closure item but take us to public hearings on this particular matter.

It's the government's point of view that the strength of the apprenticeship training system lies in a system that is founded in our workplaces. It's in that context that we need training provisions in this province that are reflective of real workplace needs, training initiatives that are led by employers and employees alike, as we continue in a collective effort to ensure that all the skilled trades' needs in this province are being met both currently and well into the future.

We've heard a lot about the declining pool of skilled tradespeople in this province and the need for us collectively, whether it's trade unions, government or industry representatives, to move in a direction where we're creating a positive climate for new opportunities for young people. As well, I might add, because often we forget those individuals who because of a particular circumstance are seeking retraining or new career directions for whatever particular reason, that they too have the opportunity to access the rewarding opportunities that exist in the skilled trades field.

It's in that context that we as a government think the apprenticeship should be led by industry, which is inclusive of employers and employees, whereby employers and employees would have a greater say in determining and establishing responsibility for training in this province. It's in that context as well that we raised the issue of wage and ratios. We've had a number of colleagues in this House raise the issue of that particular aspect, that very clearly the government feels confident in the ability of our provincial advisory committees to deal with those specific issues. Those people who sit on those specific committees which are equally represented between the worker and employer clearly have the best expertise to bring conclusion to some of those issues and position themselves to make appropriate recommendations to the Minister of Education and Training.

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It's in that context as well that the government of Ontario envisions a broader and perhaps clearer mandate for our provincial advisory committees so that their decisions, the issues they're dealing with as groups, as representatives of their particular occupation, are being very clearly heard and understood by those in senior levels of government and that those decisions are reflective of their particular area of concentration.

I want to emphasize as well we've heard concern expressed about the red seal program. I mentioned at the outset in my comments at second reading on this bill that at no point in time is it the intent of this government or the intention of this bill, nor the expectation that would flow from it, that the red seal program in this province would

be compromised. Very clearly, we are committed to a higher standard of apprenticeship training, a standard that is clearly reflective of the quality initiatives that I know both employers and employees want to pursue, and standards that will lead to safe working environments for employees and certainly safe environments for consumers of their particular trade or product, and, as well, moving in that regard to ensure that the appropriate standards are in place to protect and safeguard against that particular issue.

We heard a lot about the minimum age requirement and we want to re-emphasize again today that in fact Bill 55 speaks specifically to the age 16 requirement as the minimum standard for entering into a training agreement.

There are specific items that are in the bill. To re-emphasize the issue of wages, I heard the comments of opposition members about deregulating wages, and pursued that issue and have pressed the ministry to provide me with assurances that in fact there are locally negotiated conclusions taking place.

Just to give an example, in the tool and die sector, if we applied a minimum wage requirement under the Employment Standards Act — which, as all members will know, is approximately \$6.85 per hour — to the standard of 50 hours per week, that leads us to a calculation of just over \$17,000 for a starting salary. In fact, figures from the Canadian Tooling Manufacturers' Association show the actually negotiated starting salaries for tool and die makers average approximately \$26,000 per annum. So the market in some sectors is already dictating a higher standard than would be expected should the minimum wage be applied.

I think we've heard a lot about specific examples in terms of worst-case scenarios, but the reality of today's workplace is recognizing the skills that these individuals bring to their trade each and every day and, in that context, the employer responding appropriately with specific wage levels.

My colleague from Simcoe East made reference to young people as part of this process. The process that quite frankly has to extend beyond Bill 55 is the initiative or opportunity that we have collectively, whether through the Ministry of Education and Training, our partners, industry employers and employees collectively coming together to better market the opportunities that exist for young people in this province with respect to skilled trades.

As part of this package, as a government, as a ministry, we've attempted to capture that comprehensive approach to apprenticeship training and reforms whereby we've introduced and provided additional monies through the Ontario youth apprenticeship program in the sum of \$1.4 million of new money that is available to school boards in this province to help create programs within the secondary school setting for our students. It's at that period in their life that they obviously need to be made aware or have the opportunity to pursue new opportunities in the skilled trades area.

Clearly, the government's objective is not only to double the number of apprentices in this province, as my colleague from Simcoe indicated, but, through immediate

action in the form of the OYAP that I just spoke of, our intention is to increase the number of young people at the secondary school level participating in apprenticeship programs from approximately 1,000 individuals, where it is currently, to 2,000. Very clearly, we are developing a comprehensive plan that involves the secondary school panel, it involves the post-secondary level, it involves trade unions in this province and employers alike as we collectively recognize. There will be differences in how we arrive at the conclusion, but I think there's a sound understanding of the need to do more in terms of filling the void that we are projecting or anticipating with respect to skilled trades in this province.

It's in that context as well that the Ontario Federation of Labour has raised concerns. In my second reading debate comments I went on at length to try to respond in a progressive way to those concerns and to ensure the people of this province that, first of all, the skilled trades sector is an important sector to our economy. They're a talented group of individuals who bring a high level of skill to the workplace each and every day. They make a significant contribution to the economy of this province. Certainly in that context I can assure the people of this province and, as well, my colleagues in this Legislature that in no way are we introducing legislation that would compromise that skill level, that level of commitment that is brought to the workplace each and every day on behalf of the employees and employers in this province.

As well, it's important to emphasize that standards and quality of training will be maintained. It's a very key element in terms of the overall component that we're dealing with currently with respect to apprenticeship training.

To conclude my comments, I wish to add that this area has been consulted upon considerably since approximately 1996, when this matter was brought forward. To those in opposition who suggest the consultation was inappropriate, I would simply say that there has been considerable debate, including myself, my predecessor from Wentworth North, the Minister of Education and Training himself, whether it's through meetings with employers or trade union representatives or advisory committee members themselves in terms of where we want to be in the future. So there has been substantial dialogue.

Yes, there will be areas of disagreement. I understand that and respect the positions of those who find themselves in opposition to this bill. But I think it's important to realize that that dialogue has continued repeatedly over the course of the last year and a half. Certainly it's dialogue that continues today within the Ministry of Education and Training and with skilled workers in this province in terms of the certification process and their vision of the provincial advisory committees. It's a consultation that I feel has contributed substantially to the strength of this bill and it's in that context that I rise today to speak in support of the motion. I conclude my comments at this point in time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Further debate?

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): Mr Speaker, may I say in starting that I'd like to share my time with the

member for St Catharines and the member for Kingston and The Islands and we'll be using our full time.

I'm glad to have an opportunity to say a few words, but I think it's only appropriate to start by saying that it's unfortunate that once again the government has put forward a time allocation motion — there's no other word to be used than a "closure" motion — to basically stifle debate on this very important piece of legislation. Unfortunately, it's something this government uses with extraordinary regularity and it simply stifles debate. In our caucus we had many members who wished to speak on second reading debate. I was one of them and I'm glad that I'm being given an opportunity today to express some of my concerns about it at this time.

It's something that I think the people of this province are seeing with way too much regularity, the government deciding enough debate has taken place, "We want to force this thing through."

I recognize that the government has agreed to public hearings, and we're glad to hear about that. Certainly that is something that needs to go forward, although I still would maintain very strongly that we needed more time to debate this on second reading.

It also feeds into the fact that there have been such extraordinary rule changes in this Legislature that this government has put in place which have absolutely changed the ability of all the members of the Legislature to speak and to make their case on behalf of their constituents on all the legislation that's gone forward. The fact is, the government now has changed the rules so considerably that the amount of time one is able to debate is not there, as you know very well. The government now is adding extra sessional days, without the benefit of question period, at the end of the day. This is something that the government members won't be talking about but it's a matter of great concern to us. It's something that I think the people of the province should be concerned about and something we really would very much like to change.

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Having said that, I am glad to have an opportunity to make some reference to Bill 55. I made a few comments during second reading debate when I had a two-minute response opportunity and tried to indicate some of the areas we are very concerned about. Some of those areas were related to the whole mandated wage rate, the whole question of tuition fees, the minimum education values and the fact that they were to get rid of those. These are obviously areas we had great concerns about.

I'm particularly pleased, though, today to have an opportunity to respond to and at least get on the record a letter that has been sent to me and which happened just after second reading debate was concluded and the time allocation motion was put in place. It was sent to me by the Carpenters Local Advisory Committee in Thunder Bay, in my riding, from Vincent Young, the chairman of the local advisory committee, who really wanted to have an opportunity to have some of their concerns put forward on the public record. I am more than pleased to do that. I want to have that chance to do so on their behalf because I

think they express a number of the concerns that are being expressed by all members who have looked at this piece of legislation very carefully.

They do recognize that some changes need to be made. We hope that when the public hearing locations are decided Thunder Bay will be one of the locations that the legislative committee is able to come to. As usual, there will not be an opportunity to go to enough communities. We would prefer to have far more opportunity for people all across the province. I hope that Thunder Bay would be considered.

Let me go through some of the areas that Mr Young has expressed to the Minister of Education. May I say it was nice to finally hear the Minister of Education make some remarks in relation to this bill. One of the more unusual aspects of Bill 55 was the fact that the minister did not speak on second reading. I know that was of great concern to everyone in the Legislature. So, short as his comments were today, it was good to at least see him standing up here making some reference to the legislation that he is pushing forward so strongly.

The aspects of Bill 55 that Mr Young, on behalf of the Carpenters Local Advisory Committee in Thunder Bay, has put forward are ones that need to be on the record. They met and discussed the changes very carefully. They have a number of concerns, and they all deal with aspects of the legislation that are very important; for example, the aspect of the allowance of part-time, contract and self-employed workers to become apprentices. This gives us some concern about supervision and the training of those who would be there for only part of the time. That's an obvious concern. The Carpenters Local Advisory Committee in Thunder Bay makes the point very strongly that for the self-employed or piece workers, you wonder where they will be getting their on-the-job training from if they are indeed self-employed. I think that's a very legitimate concern that needs to be expressed.

They also are concerned about the elimination of the minimum training time. This organization feels strongly that the present program, with a minimum of two years, certainly makes for a better journey person rather than having an apprentice rushing through the course. Again, that seems to make a great deal of sense.

Let's bear in mind that one of the key aspects of a piece of legislation such as this should surely be to increase accessibility. We understand that. But it needs to be absolutely balanced with the need to make sure that the training is done in an appropriate manner. A lot of the concerns we have are related to the fact that this does not increase accessibility but in fact sets up some barriers to accessibility. These are issues that need to be discussed.

Other comments made by Mr Young in his letter to the Carpenters' District Council of Ontario and to the minister are that they feel "that allowing an apprentice to go to school when it is convenient for them would be disastrous, as our local advisory committee has had to take a hard line in not allowing apprentices to defer when scheduled for school."

The issue of restricted skill sets: I think that's an important one. As you know, previously all certified skilled trades were compulsory and anyone working in the trade had to be a registered apprentice or a certified skilled worker. Now, of course, the new act says that certain skills or skill sets may be designated as restricted so that some portions of the job need not be performed by apprentices or journeypersons, so it can be done without training, with training in a component of that job. This is something that concerns the Carpenters Local Advisory Committee in Thunder Bay as well. They feel that this would in essence set up a fragmentation of the trades, "allowing a person to become trained in only one or more segments of the trade and not becoming a truly qualified journeyperson." I think that's a very legitimate point that needs to be brought forward. If the public hearings are in Thunder Bay, I hope they have an opportunity to make those points.

There was some concern expressed also about the creation of new apprenticeships. They feel very strongly that while there may be needs for new apprenticeship programs — they're not arguing the possibility — the government should very clearly not be establishing programs that duplicate existing apprenticeship programs or trades. That's something that needs to be listened to very much by the government.

On the issue of wages and ratios, there's a very strong sense that guidelines need to be set out, especially in the construction industry, so that union and non-union contractors bidding for jobs would have to do so under the same terms. That is something as well that makes a great deal of sense.

On the issue of minimum education, they acknowledge that eliminating the education minimum might work for some apprenticeship programs. The particular group in Thunder Bay that wrote to me feels that in the carpentry trade grade 10 is the minimum that should be allowed. But the local advisory committee in Thunder Bay requires an applicant to have grade 12 math, as they have found that apprentices without grade 12 math are, generally speaking, having a hard time when it comes to doing the required schooling.

These are all points that make it very clear that many aspects of this particular piece of legislation need to be at the very least altered, and if they are not altered, it could be quite frankly disastrous, it could have very negative implications. These are points that we've all tried to make very strongly. I'm certainly glad I've had an opportunity to express those on the record on behalf of the carpenters' local advisory committee in Thunder Bay. The other members who will be speaking in our time today may make reference to others.

The issue of tuition fees is one that concerned us a great deal. There's no question that we have seen what has happened in this province as this government and the previous government increased tuition fees to post-secondary students in a dramatic fashion. One cannot help but have a great deal of concern about the tuition fees that are being imposed on the apprentices. Again, is this going to

increase accessibility? It sure looks to me like it could be a barrier to accessibility. Those are some of the issues we have.

The whole aspect of the minimum education standards also seems to be very much at odds with what the government should be looking for in terms of the education of the people in this province.

Those are some of the issues I am pleased to have had an opportunity to put on the record. I again express regret that we're in the position where we are debating a time allocation motion. I hope the government will realize this is not what the people of the province want. Those are certainly some of the issues I'm glad to have had an opportunity to put forward. I now happily pass on to my colleague.

1600

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I'm delighted to participate in this debate. I'm really sad that the government has again thought proper to introduce a cut-off on this debate. It's a very important piece of legislation, but it misses the mark in its content, in its direction. While I was here and I was glad to see the minister address the House for a few minutes, I have to say in all honesty that the government just can't have it both ways. They can't make decisions in the backroom over there and then come back into this House and say, "Look what we are doing."

With all due respect to the Premier and the minister, this piece of legislation will not do anything to lower the 14% to 18% unemployment rate we have among our young people. This piece of legislation is mainly addressed to the 25-, 26-, 27-year-old so-called journeymen or apprentices. This takes the incentive away from some employers to really go out there and attract those young people and give them good training, qualifying them for a good skill and the long-term assurance of a steady position. It is more demeaning than anything else. I can't understand why the government has been picking on all the students. It has been picking on the mature student, adult education; and now, with this piece of legislation, it's picking on the 25-, 26-, 27-year-olds, those very people who need the best of assistance when they are at a time in their lives when they want to or have already set up families, have engaged in perhaps some of the biggest expenses of their lives, purchasing a home, and they don't have the security of good training, a good, skilled job, a job with future possibilities.

The government recognizes that to teach someone a good trade takes between three and five years. This particular piece of legislation does not allow those youngsters this type of training. This piece of legislation does not revitalize the present legislation; it does not encourage, as the minister said, or attract young people to these training schools. There is one wonderful training school in Scarborough. They may have to close because of funding cuts. Can you believe that?

Instead of providing funding, instead of supporting good, established training schools, where students would get proper training and proper attention, this piece of legislation does absolutely nothing, because the government

retains no control, no supervision as to what happens in those places of employment where these young people are supposedly being trained. They are left at the mercy of some unscrupulous employers, because they will be providing training up to a certain standard and then will use them as cheap labour.

This bill does nothing but provide cheap labour. I would say it's very demeaning to all those young people who are looking to the government for a hand up, to provide some assistance so they will learn a good trade, a good skill, so they may go ahead and start up a family, buy a home, buy a car and have the security that they will have a good, reliable, permanent job, instead of half qualifications, if you will. This piece of legislation does not provide any legislative teeth. It's all done by regulation.

My time is about ended. I just wanted to mention some of the most salient points in the legislation. I would like to go into further detail. Cut off debate? I encourage the government, let's go to public hearings, let's hear what the public has to say and bring it back to this House. Hopefully, the government will see the light and make the necessary changes and provide regulations with the legislation that will provide some real skills to our young people.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): It's somewhat of a sad moment once again in this House that we're dealing with a time allocation motion. I believe this is about the 15th or 16th time this government has invoked closure. We should reflect on that for a moment. Closure is when a government cuts off the democratic debate that occurs on a particular piece of legislation. As a matter of fact, I'm wrong: It's not the 15th time the government has invoked closure; it is the 29th time this government has invoked closure.

You may recall — and the people of Ontario may be interested in this — that up until about 10 or 15 years ago, closure was almost unknown in the democratic parliamentary system. The way the democratic parliamentary system works is that the people's representatives on both the government side and the opposition side can talk as long as they want about a particular bill in the hope of changing the minds of the other people within this chamber, trying to talk some sense into them. That was the whole idea. The whole idea of the democratic parliamentary system is so that people can talk out their differences and come up with some sort of common understanding as to how things should happen and what kind of laws ought to be passed.

What unfortunately has happened is that it has become more and more customary to cut off debates. This bill has had I believe three days of debate in this House. When we say three days of debate, I'm sure the people of Ontario would think: "My golly, a day is a long time. It's 24 hours. A working day is eight to nine hours a day. Have they really talked about this bill — let's say for three days — for 24 hours?" It should be quickly pointed out to them that when we're talking about a day of debate, we're

talking about somewhere between two and three hours of total debate by all parties in this Legislature.

This is a very important bill, and the government has once again invoked closure on it. I dare say that this would have been one of those bills where the government didn't have to invoke closure. It could have approached the two opposition parties after a certain amount of debate and said, "All right, let's send it to committee, let's have some public hearings on this bill," and there would be no need for closure at all.

I find it very ironic that when this Legislature was called back into session on September 28, there were two principal issues that the government wanted to deal with as quickly as possible. Number one, it wanted to deal with the school closure situation, the fact that there were more than 200,000 children in this province who were not going to school, and on that issue all parties agreed. We literally spoke on that bill to send the children back to school and to have the matter settled by arbitration in one day, because all of us felt it was important that the education of our school children should no longer be affected in a negative manner, and so the House agreed by unanimous consent to sit until midnight that night.

I would have thought that on the day following that, two weeks ago on a Tuesday, the next bill that the government would have called would be the second most important reason we came back to this House, and that was to deal with your assessment appeal mess and the taxation mess that you caused out there. Do you know what has happened? We've been back here for two solid weeks. We've had night sittings just about every night in this House since then. By my rough calculation, we have had about 15 different sessions in this Legislature, and not once has the property tax appeal bill, which is so necessary for the people out there who feel they are paying way too much in taxes, been called.

I know the squeeze play that the government is putting on. You may recall that that bill talks about a final appeal date of October 31, and we are now on — what is it? — October 12, so I think we're about two weeks away from October 31.

Mr Ford: It's the 14th. You're two days behind.

Mr Gerretsen: It's October 14. I'm two days behind. All right, I'm wrong. It is October 14 today. If that's the best way that you can correct me in this House, then I'll give you that one.

The point is that the government is putting on the old squeeze play. They're basically saying, "We will call that bill just at the very last moment so people have the right to appeal until October 31, but we will allow as little debate on that bill as possible." That's the game plan. The minister of privatization knows that's the game plan; we all know that's the game plan.

1610

What's the reason for that? Why would the government allow three days of debate on an apprenticeship bill and only one day of debate on the property tax bill? Do you know why? The government knows that it has messed up the property tax situation of this province so badly, it has

already had six different bills introduced. The moment one bill gets passed and is given royal assent, it is immediately necessary to bring in another bill to basically fix up the mess that has been created by the last bill.

The government knows that it's going to come under some severe attack from the members of the opposition, and hopefully from some of their backbenchers as well. I am sure there are some government backbench MPPs who must be feeling just as much heat from their constituents, from their small commercial individuals and small businesses whose taxes have gone up anywhere from 300% to 400% to 500% as do members of the opposition.

The government ought to be taken to task. We on this side of the House have been telling them for the last year that when you bring in major amalgamation schemes and you bring in major current-value assessment rearrangements and you bring in the downloading scheme of new services on municipalities — which you keep saying is revenue-neutral and the municipalities keep telling us is not revenue-neutral, that it is costing the municipal taxpayer a lot more money as a result of the downloading — that is all way too much for the taxation system in this province to absorb. Now you've seen the results. The small business individual is getting hurt, not just in my community, but in your community and many communities across the province.

That is why it is necessary for you to bring in Bill 61 in order that these small business individuals and residential property taxpayers may have the right to appeal. So I am asking you, why don't you call that bill? Because I know that the moment you call it back into the House, you'll probably put some time allocation on it. You'll invoke closure once again, as you've done with this bill.

Wouldn't it be nice if all of us came to this House one week and knew exactly what we were going to discuss on the Monday, the Tuesday, the Wednesday and the Thursday? Wouldn't that be great?

If you look at rule 55, minister of privatization, the rules actually allow for that, where the government House leader gets up on Thursday and tells exactly what the business for the next week is going to be. That way the ministers could get ready with their prepared statements, the government backbenchers could get ready with their prepared statements, the opposition critics could even get ready with their usually unprepared statements. We don't have the resources that you have to have all these speeches typed up by ministry staff.

But wouldn't it be nice? We could even publish a schedule in the local newspapers and in the local media and say to people: "If you're interested in property tax appeal legislation, tune in on Tuesday afternoon. If you're interested in the apprenticeship bill being discussed, tune in on Wednesday evening."

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): Which is right now, by the way.

Mr Gerretsen: No, it's not right now. You see, the minister responsible for privatization still doesn't get it. We are not discussing Bill 55 today, sir. What we are discussing is your closure motion to basically silence the

opposition and silence this House. I am sure there are many government backbenchers who would love to say something about Bill 55, but they too have been silenced.

It's really unfortunate that a member of the executive council, a cabinet minister, still doesn't know we are not really discussing the content of Bill 55 today. We are discussing the fact that you have invoked closure for the 29th time. It started with the very first one, Bill 7. You may recall Bill 7 way back in 1995, which the labour movement in this province was extremely upset about. Who can ever forget Bill 26, on which you invoked closure on December 12, 1995? It just goes on and on and on.

I find it very unfortunate that the people of Ontario and the media of Ontario aren't more interested in this kind of issue, that the silencing of the democratic system is taking place in this House on an ongoing basis with just about every bill.

I can guarantee you that if the government House leader would put a plan into operation and would put it to the other House leaders and say, "Look, this is what I would like to accomplish; let's talk about how many days of discussion we want on this bill and that bill," you could come up with something. But no, you like to play the role of trying to, I don't know, trick the opposition or trying to catch us off guard by not letting anybody know what you're going to call from day to day, and then all of a sudden these closure motions just appear out of nowhere. Closure is not something that ought to be accepted by the people of Ontario.

I know the spin that you've put on Bill 55, that it's such a wonderful bill. Well, I have heard from people, not just people within the labour movement, who do not think it is such a wonderful bill. The whole notion that you would start charging tuition fees in apprenticeship situations, when it's already difficult, according to your own information that you've been spinning here for the last number of days when this bill has been discussed — you've already been spinning this notion that you can't get apprentices into the program under the current law and that's why we take in qualified tradespeople by way of immigration into this province and into this country.

How do you think the situation is going to be helped by charging tuition fees? How do you think it's going to be helped by removing the minimal education standards that are currently called for? How do you think the situation is going to be helped when you allow part-time and self-employed workers to become apprentices? Who is going to supervise them? I'd like the member for Etobicoke-Humber to answer me. Who is going to supervise a self-employed worker as an apprentice?

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: I see. I'm glad that answer is not on the record, because I think you're wrong in that, sir.

Mr Ford: I'm always wrong.

Mr Gerretsen: He's always wrong. At least I will give this to the member for Etobicoke-Humber: I have finally met an honest government backbencher in this House. The government member for Etobicoke-Humber

just admitted by his own statement that he is always wrong.

Hon Mr Sampson: I don't think he's going to put your support in his householder.

Mr Gerretsen: You know, it's amazing how much the minister for privatization always has to say by way of interjections at moments like this. He always has these tremendous interjections and yet whenever he's asked a question in the House during question period, he never seems to have the answer. He always has to refer to another real minister — I'm sorry, to another minister.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: I know, that was almost below the belt but not quite there.

But I would ask the people of Ontario to get involved about the issue of closure because our democratic institutions and principles are at stake here. We should not allow a government with a huge majority — which was only supported by 45% of the people, not by the vast majority of the people in Ontario as you have been spouting over the last three years — to at will bulldoze itself over the opposition. That's the reputation you've got out there, that you're bulldozing over the opposition and you're bulldozing over everybody in a bullying sort of way, whether we're talking about education, whether we're talking about health restructuring. Just think about what happened today, the headline story in not only the Toronto Star but also in the Toronto Sun, that just about every emergency ward in this city was over capacity last night and for a large part of this month.

If you're a government backbencher and you're not upset about that — if there's one issue that everyone in this province can relate to it is good, quality health care and the notion that if you need those emergency kind of treatment services they're out there for you. When I read in the paper and when the people of Ontario read in the paper that 17 out of 19 hospitals couldn't accommodate people under those kind of circumstances, I think it's an absolute tragedy for this province and it's something that we should collectively try to do something about.

1620

Mr Ford: I think so too.

Mr Gerretsen: Absolutely. It is not something that, quite frankly, we should play politics with. Let's call a spade a spade and let us admit the fact that our health care system is under a tremendous amount of stress and what you've been doing to that system isn't going to help the situation at all. The mantra that you've been spinning is, "We're closing hospitals across the province, but we're taking that money and we're putting that money back into community care services," and it is not happening. Now, I don't agree with the closing of hospitals at all, but even if I were to take your theory that somehow that money is being taken out of hospitals and you're putting it into community care centres, even if I were to take that, you're not doing that.

In my own community everybody thought that once the government decided to close the Hotel Dieu Hospital — which was objected to, by the way, by over 65,000 people

who signed petitions about that. It's an institution that has been around for 153 years, that has given good, quality care to the people not only of the Kingston area but throughout southeastern Ontario, and basically the sisters have been told to take a hike. "You're no longer needed in the health care system." At least some people thought, "With the closing of that hospital, the government is going to live up to its word and put that money into the community access centres." You know what's happened? Some 2,000 patients who are currently receiving those services there can no longer be accommodated. Why? Because of lack of money.

Your house of cards is falling down. Whatever you said before about "We're going to take money out of the hospital system and put it over there for community and home care" just isn't working out. I think you ought to be ashamed of that, in the same way that you ought to be ashamed of bringing in a closure motion again, for the 29th time.

I'm sure that our House leader, the member for St Catharines, will have something to add to this.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I thank the previous two members for illuminating the House on many of the issues surrounding this time allocation motion. For the public who watch this program assiduously each day, a time allocation motion, of course, is a motion which closes off debate, which chokes off debate.

Here we are in a relatively light legislative session, where the government has the House sitting both in the afternoon and the evening, and of course committees are sitting throughout the day as well in the morning and the afternoon and sometimes the evening, where members have a multiplicity of duties to undertake at various times during the day and the House is sitting on all these occasions. Yet we see still another closure motion closing off debate. What is particularly perturbing about that is the government has already changed the rules of the Legislature to make it easy to bulldoze any legislation, any motion, any bills it sees fit through this Legislature.

It's interesting, although we're not supposed to talk about what goes on within our caucus meetings, this morning somebody asked me the question, "Why don't you negotiate with the government for" — and I can't of course talk about what it was about. But I said: "There are no chips to play. There is no negotiating that can be done. The government has decimated the opposition completely."

When you go to a House leaders' meeting — I just came from a House leaders' meeting — the government essentially says what it's going to do and the opposition has no say. That's not the way it has always been in this House. There has been an opportunity, or at least an effort, to reach a consensus among the three House leaders and the three whips who meet together at those meetings, in times gone by. What it resulted in was perhaps some additional time for debate on a piece of legislation or perhaps a concession in terms of committee hearings.

They might want to go to Ingersoll, for instance, and we might insist, having received a letter from one of the government members, that we go to Ingersoll or Monkton,

Ontario, Stratford even — I never mention the one that the Speaker likes me to, but I will some day — one of these municipalities where there might be hearings. We used to be able to get that concession out of the government. Today, under present circumstances, the opposition has no opportunity to try to influence legislation.

In the debate over the changing of the procedural rules of this House, I remember quoting the present House leader, Norm Sterling. I'm not even going to try to paraphrase what he said; I'm going to try to capture the essence of what he said and I know he wouldn't disagree with me. I wouldn't misquote him on this issue.

He essentially said that it is absolutely necessary for the opposition to be able in certain circumstances, in certain conditions, to bring the government to a halt, to force the government to make certain changes. Not forever, because a government is elected and it is allowed to govern. I accept that fact. I may not like it but I accept the fact that that is the case when a government wins a majority. That's how we play under the present rules. People will say, "If only we had proportional representation, these people wouldn't be in power," and so on. But we're not under that system. We work under a system where we were elected all going under the same rules.

I accept the fact that a government can pass its legislation. My objection is to the fact that this government has, as they would like to say, streamlined the rules of this House — I would say rigged the rules of this House — in such a way that the government has an easy time getting legislation through.

As I warned members on the government side, if another party, let's say the Liberal Party or the New Democratic Party, were to win the next election and were to form a government, I can tell you it would be difficult, though there are some of us who would fight hard for this, to change the rules back to make this House more democratic. It's very hard to persuade a subsequent government to change the rules back when they've been the victim of those rules and when they see how expeditiously government business can be carried out.

In business it is necessary to be expeditious. I accept that. I don't expect that businesses are going to have a democratic system of the kind we have in this House. They shouldn't have, necessarily. I think they try to be as democratic as possible, but they're running a business and that's a different thing, and I appreciate that. However, there are some people who say, "We should apply the same procedures in business in this House." Just as I think it would be inappropriate to use the rules of this House to run a business, I think it is inappropriate to run the rules of this House using business tactics, because it's essential that you have all points of view heard and that there actually be some listening taking place.

I think one of the greatest losses we've had during the years of the Conservative government of Mike Harris — take away the other legislation; we can agree or disagree on that — has been the diminishing of the role of the elected Legislature and the — perhaps "assault" is too strong a word, but certainly I'll use that word for now —

assault on democracy and the democratic system which I see having taken place.

I have a concern about some aspects of this bill. We're talking about the time allocation motion as opposed to the bill now, though I know that the Speaker is quite flexible on that and some of them have done that.

The other thing that has happened is that this government with ease now uses closure motions. There was a time when the news media would have been interviewing the government House leader and the Premier and the opposition House leaders about the use of closure. It was considered to be a unique circumstance. It was something that was certainly uncommon and something that was viewed as a disgrace by many in the news media. You people get away with it easily today. It gets easier and easier to — I'm using the wrong terminology if I say "commit a crime," but if you said, for instance, that when people commit crimes it gets easier and easier, well, it's easier and easier for the government to use this kind of procedure in the House to limit and close off debate.

Mr Ford: Talk about Ottawa, Jim.

Mr Bradley: The member for Etobicoke-Humber should run for the federal House. All he says when he interjects constantly is, "Look at Ottawa." I think if for some reason he's not successful in getting the nomination in Etobicoke Centre, and my friend Doug assures me he's got a lot of people signed up, that he should consider running in Ottawa, because all he talks about is Ottawa. I think that's quite legitimate.

But I was elected to the provincial House so I deal with provincial issues. I may have a view of procedures within the House of Commons, but I was elected to this House and that's what I'll have to speak about. Despite the suggestion of my friend Doug Ford that I deviate from that, I'm going to talk about this House.

1630

The public should be concerned about the continuing diminishing of the power of elected bodies. You see, we are the only people the public can get at. They can't get at the civil service and they can't get at the advisers to the Premier, the 20-something and early-30-something whiz kids who really control this government. They can't get at them but they can get at us. That's fair ball, that's fair enough that they can get at us and express their views and hope that somehow we, as elected people, can influence what happens in this Legislature.

Every time the government brings in a motion of this kind it restricts debate on a piece of legislation. There may be merit to parts of this legislation — in fact, there is. There's some merit to this bill and there are some things with which we would disagree pretty substantially. My objection is to the fact that this government has decided it has had enough, doesn't want to deal with this legislation any more; it simply wants to rush it through the Legislative Assembly. I guess if they wanted to, they would have no hearings. The two opposition parties requested at the House leaders' meeting that there be hearings to be held across the province so those who have views on this

subject may express them. There are some in favour and some against.

I should express a concern that the news media — that is, the people at the top echelons — are not more interested in the democratic procedures within a Legislature. They consider those issues to be boring. You know what happens? If a reporter or a columnist here at Queen's Park tries to talk about procedural rules, I can tell you the editors at the top, whether it's the electronic media or the print media, simply say, "Get lost." Doug's quite right. He said they say: "Get lost. We don't want to hear about it." And yet I consider one of the most important legislative changes made by this government — and it has made many legislative changes — was the motion changing the procedural rules of this House, greasing the skids for legislation, allowing the government to move very rapidly, very drastically and without looking at the consequences of its actions.

I put this attack on democracy, which I consider these motions to be, in tandem with the bill the government passed some time ago allowing political parties to spend far more money in election campaigns and to collect far more money from political action groups, from corporations, from any sources possible, and deregulating or allowing the sky to be the limit on certain undertakings by political parties and candidates. I think that works against democracy.

The Americans have seen a system which has caused them a lot of problems. There were even allegations of inappropriate fundraising taking place within the White House itself, and both major political parties in the US have engaged in fundraising that is absolutely appalling. People running for the House of Representatives in the US spend almost all their time fundraising and they become beholden to groups and individuals who make large donations to political parties. I become very concerned about that. I don't think it's healthy for a system to be controlled by money.

If the governing party in this Legislature goes out to an election campaign and convinces the people, without having this unfair advantage, that their policies are correct, then I have to accept that result. When the people in a democracy speak they are always right, because that's what the essence of democracy is. But what is happening is that the government, through its legislation, is weighting the game out there, if you wish, the political game, so much in favour of the governing party or in this case in favour of a party which clearly caters to the large business interests and the powerful interests in this province.

They have the money. They can contribute to political parties. The people who are on welfare, the people who are in the lower echelon of our society, who may be scraping to make it through — the working poor, as they're sometimes defined, and so on — don't have the money to contribute to political parties. Huge corporations do, and they contribute to the parties, and powerful interests do. What I worry about is that if we allow by law more and more money to be contributed to candidates and

to parties, then money has more of an influence in the system.

I've been reading a bit about the American election campaign that some of us will watch with some interest — particularly when you're in a border area you tend to see some of the stations coming across from the US — where essentially an election campaign is boiling down to who has the money to put on these catchy television commercials: whether it's negative or positive advertising, who has the money to do it.

Mr Ford: It's a lot more complicated than that.

Mr Bradley: I suggest to the member, I wish it were. The member for Etobicoke-Humber said, "It's a lot more complicated than that."

I think what happens is that those of us who are acutely interested in the political system tend to read a lot about it and perhaps tend to watch television programs and listen to radio programs more extensively than the public who don't have the time or the same acute interest, so the bombarding of the airwaves with catchy commercials tends to have an undue influence on the outcome of elections. I can tell you that some of the ones south of the border are extremely negative at this time, but they are effective, so they raise a lot of money and spend a lot of money.

I prefer an election campaign to be won at the doorstep, where we go to the doorsteps, we go to public meetings, we put out a lot of print material that people can judge and say, "I agree with this party," or that party, or, "I like this candidate," or that candidate. That's fair, that's objective, and that is not happening. It's part of what I see happening with this kind of motion this afternoon.

If we look at campaigns and the pre-campaign area, I think governments of all stripes in all places should be severely restricted on the kind of government advertising they can do. I'm seeing at the present time — others may see other governments elsewhere who may do the same thing, and that's fine — a government spending millions of dollars on self-serving, partisan, congratulatory advertising. Those ads about education that people are seeing on television are paid for not by the Conservative Party; they're paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario. Now I see the Minister of the Environment is going to try to trumpet some new program he has out there without the program even being in effect.

I think there should be a body, whether it's the Provincial Auditor or an ombudsman of some kind, which should be able to pronounce on what is political propaganda and what isn't. For example, it's quite legitimate for a government to put an advertisement in a newspaper saying that there will be public hearings on Bill 61 or 62 or whatever, and, "If you want to comment, following is the way you can do so." Quite legitimate.

Or they may say there's a public meeting. I saw this on the changes to the Family Support Plan Act. They were having a public meeting at which people could have access to officials, I think of the Ministry of the Attorney General. It's quite legitimate to have that advertised and say, "If you want it explained, come on out."

But nobody can convince me or any objective person that the barrage of political propaganda — I saw one in the paper again today. The Premier has his mug in the paper and he's congratulating some company on creating jobs. I'm happy whenever there's a job created in this province. I don't think it's necessary for the Premier to have his face in an ad paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario. I think, regardless of what party is in power, that we in this Legislature should ensure, as individual members, that governments can't get away with that. Number one, it's a squandering of taxpayers' dollars, and I am sure the taxpayers' coalition and the National Citizens' Coalition are about to launch an attack on this. I haven't heard it yet, but I'm sure that's going to happen, because I know they're fair and objective people who wouldn't just see indiscretions and expenditures by NDP or Liberal governments; I'm sure they would look at all governments. So I'm expecting any day now to see the launching of an attack on that.

I think that is an abuse of public office. It gives the government an undue advantage. It squanders taxpayers' dollars unnecessarily. It's an unnecessary expenditure, and it's an attack again on the democratic process.

I also worry — I know the government members would be worried if I didn't mention this — about the concentration of ownership of newspapers in this country.

1640

One person, Conrad Black, a constituent, I am told, in York Mills — I think it's York Mills or Don Mills; the government whip told me it's his constituent — has control over, at my last count, 58 out of 104 newspapers. It may have varied a bit in this province. He owns those newspapers because he owns Hollinger, and Hollinger controls Southam. He has already said he is dissatisfied with what he called either middle-of-the-road or leftist pap that he used to see in newspapers. So Conrad Black, who has always had — I know, Doug, you'd be disappointed if I didn't mention Conrad — a very right-wing point of view, an ultra-conservative point of view, of how issues should be handled, now controls all of these newspapers.

Whether it's Conrad Black or somebody else, I am concerned when one person controls all of these newspapers, because you can start to see his philosophy permeate the newspapers. I don't think he phones the newspaper up and says to the publisher or to the editorial page editor, "You must do this or that," but it's known that that's what he wants. In an effort to try to please Conrad Black or Mr Radler, who is the henchman for him who works out of Chicago, they start to do what they think Conrad Black would like. So we start seeing newspapers which have less investigative reporting, which do not want to annoy anybody who is an advertiser, which see the shareholders as being the most important.

If you're looking at it from a straight business sense, one can understand that, but I think people who are in the media have a greater obligation to the public good and that indeed we should see some of the vibrant newspapers that we've seen in the past. I think it's very unhealthy when one person controls it.

I look at the Ottawa Citizen, for example, which I guess is the prime paper before the National gets launched, and who they hired for their editorial writers. They were the same people who sit back there behind the government, advising the government, the 20-something and early-30s-something whiz kids who have all the answers. They get them from the Fraser Institute, they get them from the research department of Mike Harris or the research department of the federal Reform Party, which is probably the same research department, and they end up writing editorials.

Does anybody expect that those editorials are going to be even-handed and fair to all points of view? They're not going to be, because those people have a very narrow point of view of this world. I've seen them on television, when they put them on television. When they want the right-wing view, they bring in one of these people. They've been schooled in the Fraser Institute, and there they are, large as life, making pronouncements.

At least I can accept my friend Doug Ford, the member for Etobicoke-Humber, who sits across there — he's a man of some considerable experience. He's obviously not 20 something or early-30s something. When he has formed his views, with his experience and so on, I may disagree with him, and I do very often, but at least I can see that he has lived his life, he has had a lot of experience out there and his views have been formulated through his own life experience.

When you bring in the YPCs, who have all the answers, and put them in charge of the government or put them in charge of the editorial boards of newspapers, you're hardly going to get a point of view which is even-handed and based on experience; rather, it's going to be straight right-wing ideology. I think that's unhealthy. I would think it's unhealthy if it were left-wing ideology. I very much distrust the ideological who see things only through the ideological eyeglasses.

I worry about that ownership of newspapers, and I've said that on a number of occasions and will continue to say that in this House.

To go back to the procedural rule changes, first of all, I should say I'm going to go back a step. With all the rule changes that have been made, it should be unnecessary for the government to bring in more closure motions, because they've got control of the whole process. Yet, as the member for Kingston and The Islands said, they brought in 29 closure motions. Now, what the rule changes do is, first, restrict debate. Debate on any bill is now restricted naturally by the amount of time that's allocated for debate on any piece of legislation. Second, they now get a two-for-one deal. In the British parliamentary system, it used to be thought that for every day scheduled for debate, that you could count as a day of debate on a piece of legislation, you had a corresponding question period. We don't have that. We have two days of debate counted for one question period.

That's unhealthy. The question period is when the government is most accountable. I can tell you, ministers hate question period. I was a minister. You don't like

question period as a minister. The opposition loves question period. But it's important that government be accountable, not only here but outside in what we call the media scrum.

They changed the order of procedures so that what the government wants happens first, and if the opposition attempts to delay anything, to perhaps gain some minor concession from the government, what is lost is question period as a result of the rules changes.

As I mentioned, they have taken away the bargaining chips. There is a trend in all government that I see — I hope it will be reversed, but in all government — of taking the power from elected people and giving it to this cadre of unelected advisers to government. I see it in various provinces, I see it certainly here in Ontario. I sit in this Legislature. It probably happens in lots of places, but because I'm elected to this Legislature, I deal with it here.

I resent the fact that, whether it's a government member or an opposition member, all of us are subordinate to the political advisers to the Premier in the province, whether it's Tom Long who happens to be a guru in the Conservative Party, or Guy Giorno, who is the chief whiz kid on the government side, and there is a John Toogood who is in the government area. There are a number of people who have influence. I kid the Minister of Transportation that he had more power when he was a whiz kid advising a political party than he has as an elected member and perhaps even as a member of the cabinet.

I think that by passing this resolution this afternoon, allowing for closure of debate on another piece of legislation, you've put another nail in the coffin of democracy in this province. That's not overstating the fact. The problem is, it's hard to reverse once it's in effect because future governments kind of like the efficiency that the last government gave them in terms of rules changes.

I hope the government members take this back to the caucus, that they challenge the Premier, and particularly that those who know they're not heading to the cabinet will challenge the Premier on this, and I hope we won't see another one of these closure motions in the days to come.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): This is an opportunity for me to put a few words on the record concerning the closure motion that is being brought in on Bill 55. I don't understand, and our caucus doesn't understand, at this point in time why the government has to bring in closure. As a previous speaker said, this is 29 or 30 times now that closure has been used in this Legislature to cut off debate, to try to muzzle the opposition parties on various bills that come before the Legislature. This is a habit that has been followed over the last number of years.

I guess it's because, when we do start debating Bill 55 and get into some of the details of it, we find out that the Ontario Federation of Labour groups are unhappy with what's in Bill 55. Some of the construction companies are unhappy with what's in Bill 55 because it's actually going to lower the standards, lower the wages and it's going to mean less funding and higher fees.

This is what this government has been attempting to do since it lowered the income tax rates for the wealthiest people in this province. They've given people in this province who don't need the money a tax break of up to 30% and, in turn, they're going to charge fees and tuition to students from age 16 up. Of course, we had fees and some charges that were involved with apprentices before, but now they're going to be able to increase them whenever they feel like it. It will be the first time ever that apprentices are having to pay tuition fees. The ratio between journeymen to apprentices is now in the law and they're going to put that in the regulations and in the guidelines for employers. The two-year minimum for contracts has been dropped.

1650

A lot of changes have taken place, not only in this particular bill but in a lot of other bills that have been brought before this House. As I said earlier, when we should be getting into a full debate on Bill 55 and looking for two or three weeks or a month of public hearings right across the province — I'm sure that people in northern Ontario would love to be able to bring forward presentations on Bill 55, An Act to revise the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act. But actually, in the present form, until we see all the regulations — and we've asked for the regulations. We've asked that the regulations be brought forward before this bill is put out for public hearings so that we'll know what's in the regulations and what changes are going to be covered in there. They haven't been brought forward.

We put a lot of blame on this government for cuts and changes that have taken place, but during the time that the Liberals in Ottawa changed the Unemployment Insurance Act there was \$40 million per year on an annual basis that was removed from apprenticeship programs throughout Ontario, even at a time when we have, from what I understand, about 26,000 employers in Ontario and about 48,000 apprentices involved in the training programs. Most of these are in unionized workplaces, where I came from in my background. I went through a four-year apprenticeship program to become a millwright.

My fear is that some of the people who have been on shift work for a number of years and who want to be able to transfer into a day job or a journeyman's job as a tradesman are going to be left out in the cold with Bill 55, unless we see some of the regulations and find out what the wages are going to be.

Before Bill 55 came forward, apprentices started out at a percentage of the tradesman's rates, and as they proceeded through one, two, three and four years of apprenticeship on-the-job training, they got up to the tradesman's rates, which in a lot of cases in the pulp mills, paper mills, sawmills throughout northern Ontario are pretty good wages. I was pleased that during the 30 years I worked in the paper mill it provided enough income to support my family.

The mill is still going strong, even though it had been through rough times during 1989-90. In 1991, with the NDP government at the time, we managed to put an

employee ownership together and worked with the unions and the membership and our government, and with Tembec. Spruce Falls now is thriving and it's the backbone of the town of Kapuskasing.

Throughout a lot of the other areas, it's not only jobs in industry, it's jobs in construction. Tradesmen are needed and we know that it's better to find them and train them within Ontario than to go outside the province.

One of the concerns that has been brought to my attention is, are we following a failed pattern? Alberta and some of the southern states brought in changes to the apprenticeship program like Mike Harris is bringing in here now. They've been a failure, and now they're looking at going back to some of the old rules and regulations that were in place before they made the changes, to try to make it better.

Public hearings are one of the ways of strengthening the bill without leaving it dangling out there, where nobody's happy with it. If the apprenticeship program in Bill 55 is going to mean it's a threat to public health and safety, consumer protection and the environment, there have to be some amendments brought forward. I'm sure we're going to hear that, now that the government has been pressured enough by our party and by the other party to agree to public hearings before it's brought back into the Legislature on November 26 for third reading.

There are a lot of other issues that this Legislature should be dealing with. We should be dealing with the threat of over 600 schools across Ontario, 100 in Toronto and another 500 spread around the province, that Mike Harris is going to force to close because of changing the formula for education. The school boards are not going to be able to keep these schools open. The Minister of Education should be trying to find ways and means of making sure that the funding formula is fair. No government has ever before set a deadline of December 31 to make announcements and decisions on closing schools.

No government has ever before announced or threatened or started closing down 35 to 40 hospitals right across the province and cut the operating budgets of all the other hospitals. I know that in all my hospitals — and I have a number of them: Moosonee, Cochrane, Smooth Rock Falls, Kapuskasing and Hearst — all the operating budgets have been drastically reduced, and at the same time this government is doing nothing to find the doctors that are needed to make sure we have healthy people and that people who do get sick in the north will be treated and looked after in the north.

It's a sad situation when we look right across the province and see the high unemployment. This government came to office in 1995 saying, "We're going to create 725,000 new jobs," and now we find out that we lost more jobs in the months of August and September than were created. Youth unemployment is well over 15%. I don't believe that standing in this House and debating closure or time allocation on Bill 55 is going to do anything to create the new jobs needed right across this province just to compensate for some of the people graduating from high schools, colleges and universities, let alone the jobs we've

lost over the last three years of this government. As I said, I don't think the answer to full employment in Ontario is Bill 55 or the time allocation that is on Bill 55.

I look at some of the ways this Conservative Tory government is trying to raise money. When they promised the 30% tax cut — and a lot of people I've talked to have said: "Where is it? I haven't seen it." You hear them advertising it on the radio and TV, "Check your paycheque; you must have got a cut in your income tax," but people are saying they haven't seen it. Yet they're saying it's out there.

To compensate for that, now we see that the students are being charged additional taxes. They're trying to raise over \$800,000 from people who apply for OSAP. Every time you make a written application for OSAP, Mike Harris and the Minister of Education are saying, "We want \$10 for our general revenues." If you phone or ask any questions on it, they're saying they want to charge \$2 for that. So in total they're trying to collect about \$800,000 in taxes from the students, and it's going into the general revenues in Ontario.

1700

There are a lot of other issues and bills that we should be dealing with. One of the concerns is that a promise was made by the Conservative government that they were going to bring in and debate Bill 161 to make sure that people had enough time to appeal their property tax assessments, since the Minister of Finance and the Premier changed all the assessment rules out there and brought everything up to current value assessment. It made it almost impossible for the municipalities to get their tax bills out on time and to go through the appeal process. That bill is sitting on the back burner. The government talks about it. In question period they say, "We wanted to get that through in one day," yet they haven't brought it back into the Legislature to be debated.

Here we are now, dealing with time allocation on Bill 55. I agree with some of the previous speakers. With the rule changes that have been made in this Legislature, at 6 o'clock at night we can adjourn the Legislature and at 6:30 we can have another day of debate, from 6:30 to 9:30. With these rule changes that have been made, there should be no reason why this government is so incompetent that they can't get their legislation through without having to use these types of tactics. For those listening out there, this time allocation motion that we're dealing with here today — they've used that 29 times in the last number of months.

When the Minister of Education started out debate on this time allocation motion, he set aside one day for organizing of the committee and four days for public hearings, but I don't believe that is enough on a bill that could drastically change the way the apprenticeship programs operate in Ontario. Think about it: What are the wages going to be? What tuition fees are going to be charged? What number of apprentices are going to be working with the tradesmen to learn the skills? Those are all rules and regulations that are being changed in this bill. We should see the regulations.

That's one of the requests I make here this afternoon to the government members: Bring forward the regulations so we can see what the intention is of this government. Is it that all apprentices will start off at minimum wage, they'll have tuition fees to pay and there are going to be other user fees that the government can change or increase at any time they feel like it?

It's just to compensate for the money they're giving back in a tax break and the damage they've done to health care, education and communities. Some communities right now, especially in the north, are saying, "They've dumped the highways on to us, the Trans-Canada Highway that's going through the north, they've dumped the land ambulances on to the taxpayers," all the dumping that is taking place. Right now we're at the point of, where do we get the dollars? Do we fill a pothole in the road or do we close the library or do we close the arena? Because the money is not there.

All the government grants to northern Ontario have been cut off — well, they will be completely cut off within another year and a half. Right after the next provincial election there will be no more grants for northern Ontario. They need some assistance from general revenues, because first of all we have extreme winters in the north, we have long distances between communities and there are added costs in northern Ontario that some places in central or rural southern Ontario don't have. It's impossible to raise the property taxes enough to compensate for the lifestyle that people would like to continue to lead. It's all as a result of dumping and downloading all the services that should be paid out of general revenues.

At the same time, money that could have been spent on health care and education is being given away in a phony tax scheme, a sham. Our party is saying, why do that? Why not make a cut-off point at \$80,000? The people who are making \$80,000 and more shouldn't get that tax break, and there would be money out there to have a good health care system and education system and make sure that the communities stay healthy. But that is not the case.

Even today during question period the Minister of Health was unable to explain why she was caught off guard when all the hospital emergency wards had to close over the long weekend. They were swamped with ill people turning up at the emergencies and they just had to close their doors. There were only one or two emergency wards open, and the ambulance drivers were being used as something like taxi drivers, driving around trying to find out if they could find an emergency ward that was open to treat the ill people. That's a sad situation in Ontario, when we have the wealth and we have the dollars and it's just being squandered by the Conservative government. The Liberals in Ottawa are not helping by cutting off \$40 million annually to the revenue program.

Hon Mr Sampson: Who did that?

Mr Len Wood: It's the Liberals in Ottawa. Now we see Paul Martin on the news today saying he has a surplus. Why doesn't some of that surplus come back into the province of Ontario to help out with health care, education and communities?

When we were in government Brian Mulroney started doing that to us, back in the early 1990s. Now Chrétien is continuing on the same trail and Mike Harris is doing that in the province of Ontario. You can't blame everything on the province of Ontario when you find out what the Liberals are doing in Ottawa, but that's the time for another election.

I know there are a number of other people from my caucus who would like to speak. I put some of the concerns I have on the record. As a former apprentice, going through the millwright trade and becoming a tradesman, and then getting elected to this Legislature, I know the changes that are being made with Bill 55, if there are not amendments brought forward, are not going to be good for the employers, the employees or the people in the province of Ontario.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm glad to pick up where my colleague from Cochrane North just left off and express, as he has done, the dismay we have in seeing the government once again resort to a time allocation motion to deal with a significant piece of legislation, but, interestingly enough, one on which there has been reasonably good debate so far and I think one which certainly we in the New Democratic Party have been saying to the government is a major piece of legislation that requires full discussion, not just in this House but in committee, and requires hearings not just here in Toronto but throughout the province.

On that score I'm happy that the government is actually responding. I think they're moving a little bit too fast on this in terms of what needs to be done. I'm concerned that with the bill going to committee, as I gather it will do certainly as a result of this time allocation motion, and with the opportunity the committee will have to look at this bill, not just through its regular sittings while the House is sitting but with the addition of this week of break that will take place — and I use that term loosely, because it's a break in terms of the House not sitting but a week in which the committees at least will be sitting to deal with this bill and potentially other pieces of legislation.

I'm glad that opportunity is there. I have concerns about how quickly the government wants to get this bill back. I think November 26 is the time line they're setting for final committee consideration of clause-by-clause. That's the general government committee to which this bill will be referred, assuming that this motion this afternoon passes.

1710

The problem I see with that, as I said, even though I'm happy about the fact that it's going to committee and that there will be an opportunity for people from the Ontario Federation of Labour, people from the various construction trades and others who are interested in this bill and who have very particular and strong views on this to come forward and to again admonish the government for what's it's trying to do here, as well as perhaps give them the occasional kudo for the pieces they maybe have gotten right — as happy as I am that there will be an opportunity for this bill to be addressed in committee, I am concerned

whether we can deal with the issues that have to be addressed quite frankly in the time between now and November 26.

One of the things that worries me particularly about this bill is that there actually is not a lot in the bill. There are some pretty fundamental pieces that are significant, some of which are quite disturbing. My colleague from Cochrane North mentioned a few, and I want to touch on a couple of those. But one of the things that I think he also mentioned and that we have noted — certainly our critic, Mr Lessard, our colleague from Windsor-Riverside, made this comment repeatedly in his comments on second reading of this bill in this House — is that it's a very skimpy bill in terms of what's in the legislation.

It will eventually replace, when this is passed, the existing laws and regulations which are now found largely under the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act by repealing that legislation. It sets up a whole new scheme of apprenticeship in the province, but a lot of those details will not be in legislation. A lot of those significant pieces will be set out in regulation.

One of the concerns that we have, and certainly one of the concerns that people from the Ontario Federation of Labour and others have raised, is knowing what is going to be in those regulations. We find this more and more the case with the way in which this government chooses to act. They will bring forward a piece of legislation which has some of the skeletal pieces of whatever the area of reform is that they want to engage in, and then they leave a lot of the very important pieces to be sorted out in regulation.

People out there may say: "What's the big deal? What's the difference? At the end of the day, it's all the law, whether it's in the legislation or in the regulations." The basic problem and the basic difference, Speaker, as you well know, is that we don't get an opportunity here in this House to actually discuss and debate, nor do we get the opportunity to do that in committee, the regulations that come under any piece of legislation. There may be the occasional attempt or possibility of doing that through things like the estimates committee etc, but it's very limited.

When we come to a situation like this where we have a major revamping of the apprenticeship program in this province and we have a government that is intent on, in effect, putting a lot of the very important details — I say "details," but they're not really details, because with details one could understand that you can't put all of those pieces necessarily in the legislation. But a lot of the important rules that will govern the conditions under which the apprenticeship system will work and under which apprentices will be asked to function will not be in the legislation, and that is a concern. That does not make for good public accountability, because the regulations can simply be passed by cabinet behind closed doors. There's lots of what the government calls consultation, there's lot of sitting down and listening to what some groups like the Ontario Federation of Labour and other groups may have, but at the end of the day there is no public accountability

in the same way that there is to a limited extent in terms of legislation going forward.

I know our colleague Mr Lessard will be doing this as we get into committee, so I again say to the government, and particularly in this case to the Minister of Education, who is responsible for this piece of legislation, and to his parliamentary assistant: We want to see those regulations. We want to know what you're intending to put into those regulations. We would like to see those important pieces of this new system out in front of the public. We want to see what the government intends to do so that people can react to that as well, because that's going to be as significant as, perhaps more significant than, what actually will be in the legislation.

Having said that, let me just reiterate how unfortunate I think it is that the government has chosen once again to resort to a time allocation motion to deal with this bill. This is one where there was I think reasonable debate going on in the House. I certainly assume that if that had been allowed to carry on, there would have been some sort of agreement around when to get this bill out to committee. But once again the government has chosen to set the tone, set the rules, set the pace, decide that three days of debate on second reading was in their view sufficient for this bill and that now they wanted to bring in the time allocation or closure motion that ends debate on this and that dictates the timelines the bill will follow as it goes from here to committee and then back, as I said, by around the end of November, to become law before Christmas.

I think we are going to again see a situation in which the government will miss important pieces both because of errors and, quite frankly, because of its intentions. This is where we get again into what the government is doing here, because as Mr Wood has just reiterated and certainly Mr Lessard, our critic, has put on the record, we and groups like the Ontario Federation of Labour have some very significant concerns with what we are seeing come forward in this piece of legislation. We see this as a very significant step by the government to, in effect, deregulate the apprenticeship system.

I think we could all readily agree that we need a very good apprenticeship system in this province. I think we could all also agree that there are some good things that are happening through our apprenticeship program but that there are some significant improvements that need to be made.

I can recall, going back to at least about 1981 or 1982, when as a member of the Toronto school board at the time we actually spent quite a bit of time looking at the needs in a number of areas of trades and other areas in terms of the apprenticeship system. We actually sent forward a proposal to the then Tory Minister of Education, Bette Stephenson, who was responsible for this area at the time, proposing that the government take some stronger action, put forward some monies, some funds, but also come up with some revamping of the rules that would put a greater responsibility on to the companies that reap the benefits of the education and training that we provide in our system to actually come up with some funding as a way to comple-

ment the public funding that goes in. It was not even an idea that we came up with on our own. In fact, we copied the idea, if I can use that phrase, from the experience that has been going on in a number of countries.

The notable example that we looked at was the situation in West Germany, as it was then, and Germany as it is now, where there has been for some time, and I believe still exists today — I haven't had a chance to update myself on this in terms of whether that system is essentially the same, but I don't think it has changed very significantly. In effect, there is an obligation in law for public and private companies to actually contribute in two ways that they can choose. One is by taking on a certain number of apprentices in the various functions that they perform, because it's a whole range; it's not just the construction area but it's in a whole range of areas. If companies choose not to do that, then they are asked to contribute a certain amount — I think it's determined by the size of the company and various factors like that — into a national fund that then gets redistributed to help support the apprenticeship program, to help pay for the apprenticeship system and the apprenticeship program.

That is based very much on the belief that it makes sense to invest in our young people in providing them, obviously, a good classroom education, as we want and need to do, but also in providing them, where the interest exists, in addition to the classroom experience, with a real series of on-the-job experiences which then works into an apprenticeship program and which can result in people coming out of that system very well qualified after a reasonable period of time to be able to carry on that particular trade.

That is something that certainly I believe needs to happen here in this province. That proposal was turned down at the time by the then Minister of Education, Bette Stephenson. What we are seeing and have seen since then have been some improvements in the system, but what we see now, as I understand it, is a setback to the system that at least we've had the ability to build up over a period of time.

1720

That is because of a number of the changes that are in this legislation. One of the things in here — my colleague Mr Lessard touched upon this in his comments earlier on last week when this bill was in front of the House on second reading — is that we are going to see a system that is deregulated, that reduces some of the standards that are there.

We have a concern, for example, around the issue of at what point young people should get into apprenticeship programs. We were concerned earlier that the government seemed intent in their discussion paper to actually eliminate both the existing age of 16 years as well as the grade 10 as a minimum to be able to get into an apprenticeship program. The bill as we have it in front of us seems to have put back in the age of 16 as a basic requirement, but it says nothing about the educational requirement; that is, it doesn't say that a student has to have completed grade 10 before they can enter an apprenticeship program. I

have to tell you, as a former Minister of Education and as a former school trustee, that's something that concerns me.

I think I understand the argument that some people might make, which is: "What if students have not completed grade 10? They still ought to be given the opportunity to come into a particular apprenticeship program, because then they can learn a trade." But I don't believe it takes away at all from that valid goal and objective to say that our young people need to be supported in achieving at least that basic grade 10 requirement, because I think what's going to happen when young people don't do that is a whole set of other skills that they should build as a result of that grade 10 credit requirement or grade 10 level are also not there, and they may not be there even as they finish the apprenticeship program. My concern is that then they might find, further down the road, when they're young adults or older adults, that there are some things they have missed, there are some things they need, whether it's language proficiency or literacy levels etc. I think it behooves us not to encourage a situation in which we say it isn't necessary for someone to have at least a grade 10 education.

I'm prepared to listen to the other side of this and quite frankly even prepared to say maybe there needs to be some flexibility in that, but at some point, before we say to someone, "You're an apprenticeship, you've done the apprenticeship program and you now can go up to the next level," there has got to be some understanding that grade 10 is at least the basic requirement. I worry if we are beginning down a road that dilutes that to the point where what we are doing is condoning or encouraging a situation in which young people leave the formal school system without even that basic requirement.

I recall back to the days when I was on the school board and many a student who was leaving without their grade 10 education under the leaving-school-early programs that existed then and still exist today. It was heart-wrenching to see these young people leave school for a whole variety of reasons and often go into a variety of not particularly intriguing or challenging jobs and then find themselves, a year or two later, regretting that they had done that.

I just don't want to see us, through the apprenticeship program, encouraging that kind of situation to happen. I hope this is one of the areas that gets looked at, because I think it is one where, while we all agree that we want to open up the doors as much as we can to allow and encourage our young people to at least experience, and if they are particularly interested, to continue and become seriously involved through the apprenticeship program in learning a trade, that is also something that should never be looked at as a replacement for the formal — maybe "formal" is not even the right word — the more academic skills that our young people also need to learn. Somewhere there's got to be room for both of those things to be done.

As I say, I know that is an issue that's going to be addressed. I do think that is for me one of the major issues that is here, but there are others, and I just want to touch on a couple of them.

One of the things that we are concerned with, and this is an issue that's been raised by the Ontario Federation of Labour and others, is that this bill will allow for the payment of lower wages than exist now through apprenticeships. I think that's something that we start off by saying we don't agree with what the government is doing here and that's something that needs to be looked at.

The other equally important issue is what is happening to the ratio between the number of apprentices and the journeyman who will be in charge of or responsible for coordinating those programs. It comes to an issue that you cannot have a good system in place if you increase the number of apprentices that each journeyman is going to be responsible for.

It doesn't sound very different, in one aspect, from what the government is doing in the classroom situation. This is, after all, the classroom equivalent in terms of the apprenticeship program. There the government is trying to do a lot, including a lot of ads, as we know.

The government says it's asking teachers to teach just a little bit longer, it's not asking for teachers to teach more students. But the reality is that one of the outcomes of what the government is doing, unless there is some flexibility left at the local level to be worked out between teachers and school boards, is that we will see a situation in which teachers will not just be teaching longer or teaching more, which many of them said they're quite happy to do, but will be forced to teach more students.

I keep saying every time we deal with an issue of education that when it comes to education, our primary concern should not be quantity, our primary concern should be quality. That is, we should be striving to do the very best that we can do and, quite frankly, worry second about how much that's going to cost.

Obviously the dollars that we spend are important. Obviously we want to make sure that they are spent in the wisest way possible. But never do I believe that we should be prepared to sacrifice for the sake of some dollars the quality of what we want to do, and the improvement in that quality.

I say that when it comes to classroom education, and I believe that and say that equally when it comes to the apprenticeship program. If we want a good, sound apprenticeship program, we ought to be prepared to invest in it. Charging young people tuition fees is not exactly an inducement or an encouragement for them to take part in the apprenticeship program. Being able to charge even more than was previously the case is not going to do that. Having more apprentices to each journeyman is not going to exactly encourage the various unions and others to become more heavily engaged in this. Dropping the two-year requirement, which is another provision of this bill, is not going to encourage good quality results.

So those, and a number of other things that I could go on about, are all reasons why we believe that the direction the government is going with this bill is wrong. I know there are some things in here that some people will find appealing and agreeable, and that's fine. That's what the committee process will help us to sort out. At the end of

the day, I would be happy to say to the government, "You got it right in this area," that's what comes out of the process, "but you're still absolutely wrong in these important areas."

But I just hope that the government, as it goes out to the committee on this — and maybe, given that we're now just months away from the next election and the government seems to at least be intent on trying to give the impression that they are in a listening mode as opposed to simply telling everybody what they think is right for them, whatever the group might be or whatever the issue might be, whether it's health care, education or in this case the apprenticeship program — I hope that the government is now, whether for good intentions or bad or whatever motives, prepared to actually seriously listen. Because if this bill is going to go out to committee, even in the short time that the committee will have on this, they will hear very clearly from the people who are the day-to-day experts in this area of apprenticeship what the real problems are with this bill.

I've just simply outlined a few, my colleagues have as well, but there are people who will be able to go into greater detail. There are people whose expertise I hope that the Minister of Education and his people look at seriously.

More significantly, I hope the political will is there. For whatever the reason, I hope the will is there to actually listen to what inevitably will be heard. That will say to the government that the apprenticeship program needs to be improved but that this particular course of action that the government is taking is not the way to do it.

1730

This is major area. We know that there are some 48,000 apprentices working now and more than 26,000 employers who are involved, and most of these are in unionized workplaces, I'm glad to say. So we aren't talking about a very small program, we aren't talking here about a very small initiative. We are talking about a pretty significant piece of the way in which we help prepare our young people for what lies ahead. We know we need to do a better job of training apprentices in the various trades and we know we need to do a better job of encouraging young people to see that as a very viable option.

I can tell you, because it's something I see in my own extended family situation, I know perhaps most closely the situation within the carpentry area that has been most affected. We have and still continue to have an aging population in terms of the people who are qualified to do those jobs and those tasks. So it behooves us to do a much better job to encourage our young people to see getting into an apprenticeship program and into one of these trades as something that is viable, something that is sensible, and also as something that is going to be economically a good thing for them because they will come out of that with a good trade, a certificate to be able to work in a trade that will allow them not just to put food on the table but to take care of themselves and their families in a reasonable way and to do it in an honourable fashion, to do it knowing they can say, "I am a skilled

tradesperson in this area." That has to be seen, in the public psyche, as important as saying, "I am a doctor" or "I'm a lawyer."

But having said that, I also don't want to see a situation in which we are now, through provincial legislation, purporting to in effect lower the standards for apprenticeship programs, because that would simply enshrine even more the notion that somehow being in a trade is not as good as being in a profession.

I say to the government, think hard about this. Think hard about the message you are sending to young people and to society in general when you give the impression, and perhaps even more than the impression, that you are prepared to sacrifice formal education or the academic part of the education in exchange for the skill area of the training. To me, it doesn't have to be a trade-off.

Quite frankly, I think it's a marrying of those two that results in the very best situation we can have, where young people are given the options, are encouraged to look at these options as very viable and are then in effect encouraged, not by having tuition fees charged but by seeing that the system is prepared to invest in a two-year or sometimes longer training period for them that complements what goes on in the classroom with some on-the-job experience and training under skilled tradespeople who are there in large enough numbers that they can look after and guide these young people through these trades; at the end of which our young people can come out of that with a skill they can be proud of and that they can then use to earn a good living to be able to take care of themselves and their families.

That would be a very good step forward. But what would not be a good step forward is if this government simply retains the skeleton of what we have in front of us in Bill 55 today, rushes through, makes perhaps one or two changes and then comes back and says, "We listened, and by the way, we haven't changed anything because we think we're right." That would be wrong, and I hope the government doesn't take that course of action. Time will tell.

I'll sit down at this point, because I know that others of my colleagues want to speak on this as well, but I'll be looking forward to what happens in committee and what comes out of committee most significantly.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to yet another closure motion that this government has brought forward. It's extremely disappointing for all of us that this government appears to be so afraid of a thorough debate in this House of a bill that is as important as this one.

It is always puzzling to us why the government is so all-fired bent on passing these things within a very tight timetable when most government members can't even bother to be in the House to hear the debate. I wonder, Mr Speaker, if you would check to see if there is a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is there a quorum present?

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for London Centre.

Mrs Boyd: I think this is a really important issue, the fact that the government keeps making these motions to try and force through legislation that deserves a thorough discussion. If there is any kind of saving grace to it, at least we are assured that the government is committing itself to hearings on this so that the issue will be thoroughly discussed at the hearings.

It's extremely important for us to recognize that there are many people in our society who see this bill as a continuation of the government's unremitting attack on education, and there are those who have waited and hoped for a long time that the commitments the government members have made within their own constituencies and indeed to the trades organizations were going to actually be embodied in legislation.

In our community we meet, as a group of members, frequently with our local community college, and the issue of apprenticeship has been one of the major topics of conversation brought forward to us by the college personnel and by the students' council as a real issue. Invariably, the government attacks the federal government members because of the lowering of support for apprenticeship that the federal government has done, and that's certainly true. That's part of the problem we have with apprenticeship in this country: We do not have leadership on the part of the federal government that would require businesses to participate in decent, well-funded apprenticeship programs.

The attitude of the federal government to the whole apprenticeship program is a horrible problem. But of course when provincial governments think something's important and they're faced with that kind of action on the part of the federal government, they have some choices. Certainly in our community we were led to believe that this was an issue that was very important to our local members and that they would personally take some leadership in terms of the apprenticeship question.

The bill we're today voting on closure for is very far from the representation of the kind of program that was necessary to strengthen apprenticeship in this country. There is no logical reason why we in this province, we in this country, cannot have a very fine apprenticeship program that gives status, gives quality jobs, to those who work in the trades.

1740

I have maintained for a long time, as my colleague from Dovercourt suggested, that the issue of status is a very real issue and that many of us forget how heavily we rely on people who practise the trades, how much our safety and comfort rely on the skill they bring to their job.

Certainly, as we go into a more and more technologically sophisticated age, it is extremely important for people who work in these trades to have the flexibility and the knowledge base and the ability to learn that are going to stand them in good stead in the future. So the fact that

the bill itself does not require at least a minimum of grade 10 is going to continue to be a problem, not just for us as opposition but for all the people out there who understand how desperately we need well-trained tradespeople and how this particular bill militates against that kind of skill and training.

It is extremely important for us to really understand the age bump that is there in so many of our trades now. We do not have a lot of time to build up those skills among the younger generation and we have a very substantial problem already in some of the trades because there are not people there to take the jobs available. In fact, one of the things that really makes me very angry about the Liberal federal government is the fact that they encourage tradespeople to come from other countries to fill those jobs but they will not use some of the employment insurance money, some of the HRDC resources, to ensure that this kind of program is well financed. To me, that is just not conscionable.

Having said that, for the provincial government then to give way to the pressure groups, and they are very noticeable groups, who have wanted them to water down the requirements, to deregulate the salaries, to take the burden of having a decent ratio of journeymen to apprentices out of the picture — they have completely caved to that lobby and ignored both the people who are willing to participate with them in improving this program in all the trade groups in the labour movement and the people in the community colleges, the people in the private training area who are there as resource people and who are telling the government that what this does is drive down the status of the trades and make it a situation where instead of having highly skilled, well-respected people who will earn a good living and, frankly, pay good taxes, the kind of training program being put in place is designed to create an underclass.

Of course we've seen this before. We've seen many actions by this government that appear to be absolutely focused on having a large pool of disposable labour, disposable labour that is not able to rely on collective agreements to have a decent standard of living, that is casual in its nature, that can simply be sent away when their particular skill is not needed and then be expected to be so desperate for work, given the efforts of the government to ensure that people become desperate when they're unemployed, that they will come back and work for even lower wages and less protection.

If anyone in the government thinks that in the long run this is the way we build an economy that's based on value-added kinds of industries, that's based on the skills that are needed in the next millennium, they're dreaming in Technicolor.

That is the real problem with the bill. It's the problem with the government's determination to push the bill through. I always like to read these particular motions because it often says to me that there must be something in the government's mind that we haven't quite got our sense around. I'm really interested in the with which the government is insisting on getting this bill through all the

processes by December 1. The time limits in the time allocation motion that we're debating today clearly indicate that the government is absolutely determined to have this bill in place by the time the House rises on its calendar date, at least, of December 10. It makes you wonder what the rush is, because it doesn't seem to match any of the other timetables that we think there ought to be.

Every piece of the bill is relaxing standards, relaxing regulations that frankly, if anything, should have been made more stringent. There has been a recommendation for a long time that the academic qualification ought to have been a grade 12 qualification. Experts are telling us that young people coming up through school today need to be looking at a situation where they will have at least four or five changes of the kind of work they do during their work life. If we're going to prepare them for that kind of changed society, they need all the skills they can get.

It seems to me that a government that is relaxing some of those rules, that is not prepared to insist upon a good academic base — we're not talking about an academic base that prepares people to go for a PhD someday, but we are asking for an academic base that's going to enable people to do a thorough report if they need to, based on the kind of work they're doing, that is going to allow them to have the mathematical skills to do the drafting, the planning, the measuring they are going to need to do, that is going to give them a very clear understanding of what their place is in society and the importance of work in that society. That should be a very important issue.

It seems to me that what the bill will do is undermine the kind of compulsory certification of trades that we have had. It's going to do that even though the complaint about apprenticeship for a long time has been that it's not stringent enough, that it doesn't give sufficient training for people to have the kinds of skills they need for today. In any other western country, certainly in the European countries, where the skilled trades are given status and importance, as they should, as being an essential part of the economy, you would not find this kind of erosion of standards that we're seeing here.

I suppose that given what we see in every other area, particularly of education, with this government's actions, that's what we need to look forward to. We need to look at the whole package of how this apprenticeship bill fits into the kinds of actions that the government is doing. The education system that it envisions does not really prepare us for the future, but in fact is prepared to divide us into goats and sheep, is prepared to set up a situation where there is a huge pool of people who are so desperate for work that they will agree to the erosion of their working conditions. That is what this government has as an ideal.

1750

Mr John L. Parker (York East): In the time available this afternoon before we are called to a vote, I thought I might just touch on some of the issues that have already arisen in this afternoon's discussion.

One of the themes I have heard repeated at some length is the theme that this government is intent on pushing legislation through, that somehow there is something

unusual in the haste with which this government is moving legislation forward, particularly this legislation. This is, after all, a motion for time allocation, a closure motion. This is the government saying that this bill has been thoroughly debated and it's time to bring the bill to a vote so the bill can proceed on to the next stage, in this case the stage of public consultation in the committee process.

Let's look at the record of this government in moving legislation through the process in comparison with the records of two other recent governments. In the 361 sessional days that this government has sat so far, the government has passed 89 bills. That's a rate of about one bill every week, or 0.25 of a bill every sessional day.

How did the Liberals do under David Peterson, in the three-year government of David Peterson, the 34th Parliament? The government sat for 297 days and passed 183 government bills, more than twice the number of government bills that this government has passed through the system, in fewer sessional days. They were cranking bills through this Legislature at a rate of more than one every two sessional days. This government is allowing, on average, a full four days of sessional debate at second reading, four days of debate in the House for each bill that it passes through.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The point has just been made or attempted to be made that this government allows four days of debate per bill. I've got a sheet right here with 29 bills on it —

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point, but it's not a point of order.

The Chair recognizes the member for York East.

Mr Parker: I appreciate that the truth does hurt for the member for Kingston and The Islands. Maybe he would be interested in some other statistics. Let's talk about the amount of time given to second reading of bills under this government. On average, in the first session of this Parliament, government bills have received four hours and 50 minutes of debate time in this House. During the second session, the session that we are currently in, government bills are receiving, on average, five hours and 33 minutes of debate in this House.

Let's compare that with the Peterson Liberals, where government bills got barely over an hour of debate on second reading in the first session, one and a half hours of debate in their second session. In the third session — guess what? There was no third session, because the Peterson Liberals looked at the polls, looked at the economic conditions, knew it was time to turn tail and run, called a snap summer election, and got what they deserved.

Third reading time: This government has given two hours and 10 minutes on average on third reading of government bills. How much time did the Peterson Liberals give on third reading? Seven minutes during their first session. During their second session they were twice as good, better than twice as good: 15 minutes of debate time on government bills on third reading. That's the record of the Peterson Liberals.

I don't know how the member for St Catharines could have survived in the House under those conditions. He probably never got nearly the air time that he's getting for free from us these days, with all the debate that government bills get in this House day in and day out, constantly, throughout the term of this government.

By comparison to the NDP, you might be interested in knowing how the Bob Rae government did. They certainly did better than the Peterson Liberals but far short of the Harris Tories. During the Rae government, government bills on second reading got, on average, just less than one hour and 30 minutes in debate time. Again, what's the Harris record? Four hours and 50 minutes on average. The Bob Rae NDP government: one hour, 28 minutes. The Liberal record was one hour, eight minutes.

On third reading, the NDP had, on average, 48 minutes during their first session. The Liberal record, remember, was seven minutes for a government bill in their first session. The Harris Conservative record: two hours and 10 minutes' debate time on third reading during the first session.

So when you want to talk about ramming bills through, when you want to talk about allowing the process to run its course, when you want to talk about allowing this House to debate bills fully and to have the bills thoroughly reviewed before this House, neither the NDP nor the Liberals have anything to teach the Harris Conservative government.

How about committee time? We all know the importance of taking the process out to the people, out of the confines of this building, going out on the road and taking the bills out to the other communities around the province to give other people an opportunity to participate in the process, to consult, to express their views and to have their thoughts brought forward.

The Harris government total committee travel time: 773 hours, 29 minutes. How about the Peterson Liberal government committee travel time outside the confines of Queen's Park, out into the province, out into the other communities, consulting with the people? The Harris government is 773 hours, 29 minutes; the Peterson Liberals, 349 hours, 45 minutes, about half as much. How was the Bob Rae NDP? A lot better than the Liberals, not as good as the Harris Conservatives: 645 hours. The Harris government, 773 hours plus; the Peterson Liberals, 349 hours committee travel outside Queen's Park.

So when we want to talk about consulting, when we want to talk about debate, when we want to talk about giving the process an opportunity to examine government bills thoroughly and to debate them thoroughly, this government stands second to no one in this decade in allowing the process to run its full course, in allowing bills to be thoroughly debated, analyzed and taken out on committee.

This government certainly has no lesson to learn from the previous Bob Rae government, and I'll tell you something else, Mr Speaker. Neither the Bob Rae NDP nor the Harris Conservatives have anything to learn from the Liberals as far as consulting the people is concerned.

The Peterson Liberal record is the worst record of any government in this decade.

Mr Speaker, I urge you to call us to a vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Notice of motion number 31: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members.

The division bells rang from 1800 to 1805.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bassett, Isabel
Boushy, Dave
Brown, Jim
Chudleigh, Ted
Danford, Harry
Doyle, Ed
Elliott, Brenda
Eves, Ernie L.
Ford, Douglas B.

Hardeman, Ernie
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Johnson, David
Kells, Morley
Leach, Al
Martiniuk, Gerry
McLean, Allan K.
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Saunderson, William
Shea, Derwyn
Sheehan, Frank
Skarica, Toni
Smith, Bruce
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Vankoughnet, Bill
Villeneuve, Noble
Wilson, Jim

Fox, Gary
Froese, Tom
Gilchrist, Steve
Grimmett, Bill

Parker, John L.
Preston, Peter
Ross, Lillian
Sampson, Rob

Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles
Boyd, Marion
Bradley, James J.
Caplan, David
Churley, Marilyn
Colle, Mike
Conway, Sean G.

Cordiano, Joseph
Curling, Alvin
Gerretsen, John
Kormos, Peter
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Lessard, Wayne
Martin, Tony

Morin, Blain K.
Phillips, Gerry
Sergio, Mario
Silipo, Tony
Wildman, Bud
Wood, Len

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 46; the nays are 20.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being approximately 6:08, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1808.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)
		Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Long-Term Care, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Soins de longue durée, ministre délégué aux affaires des personnes âgées	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
		Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
		Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
		Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener	Wetlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
		Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
		Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
		Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
		Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)		Wood, Bob (PC)
Cornwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	London South / -Sud	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Don Mills	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation	Markham	Smith, Bruce (PC)
			DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Middlesex	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Durham Centre / -Centre	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Mississauga South / -Sud	
	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	
Durham East / -Est	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires		
Durham West / -Ouest	Munro, Julia (PC)	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
	Saunderson, William (PC)		
Durham-York	North, Peter (Ind)		
Eglinton	Hoy, Pat (L)		
Elgin	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Essex-Kent	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)		
Essex South / -Sud	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Etobicoke-Humber	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président		
Etobicoke-Rexdale	McLeod, Lyn (L)		
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Marchese, Rosario (ND)		
	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)	Sarnia	Boushy, Dave (PC)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Sault Ste Marie /	
Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)
Nickel Belt	Morin, Blain K. (NDP)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)
	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Norfolk	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Northumberland	Carr, Gary (PC)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Oakville South / -Sud	Colle, Mike (L)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Oakwood	Caplan, David (L)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Oriole	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Oshawa	Patten, Richard (L)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)		Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa East / -Est	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Sudbury	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Ottawa-Rideau	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Sudbury East / -Est	Ramsay, David (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	Cullen, Alex (L)	Timiskaming	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, président du Conseil de gestion
Ottawa West / -Ouest	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Victoria-Haliburton	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Oxford	Ruprecht, Tony (L)		Kormos, Peter (ND)
Parkdale	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Waterloo North / -Nord	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Parry Sound	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Welland-Thorold	Doyle, Ed (PC)
	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Wellington	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Perth	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Wentworth East / -Est	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Peterborough	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Wentworth North / -Nord	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Port Arthur		Willowdale	Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Prescott and Russell /			Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Prescott et Russell			Duncan, Dwight (L)
Prince Edward-Lennox-			Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
South Hastings /			Parker, John L. (PC)
Prince Edward-Lennox-			Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
Hastings-Sud			Klees, Frank (PC)
Quinte	Fox, Gary (PC)		Sergio, Mario (L)
Rainy River	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)		Kennedy, Gerard (L)
	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique		
	Conway, Sean G. (L)		
	Churley, Marilyn (ND)		
Renfrew North / -Nord			
Riverdale			
S-D-G & East Grenville /	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	York Centre / -Centre	
S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York East / -Est	
	Bradley, James J. (L)	York Mills	
	Froese, Tom (PC)	York-Mackenzie	
	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Yorkview	
		York South / -Sud	
St Andrew-St Patrick			
St Catharines			
St Catharines-Brock			
St George-St David			

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario**

Second Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Deuxième session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
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Wednesday 14 October 1998

Mercredi 14 octobre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 14 October 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 14 octobre 1998

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER
AND LOBBYISTS STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 CONCERNANT
LE COMMISSAIRE À L'INTÉGRITÉ
ET LES LOBBYISTES

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 69, An Act to amend the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 and to enact the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur l'intégrité des députés et édictant la Loi de 1998 sur l'enregistrement des lobbyistes.

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Would you please check if we have quorum.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Windsor-Riverside.

Mr Lessard: Thank you, Speaker, for ensuring that there were enough people to listen to the sequel to the debate with respect to lobbyists registration legislation. I know that last night members were listening quite intently to what it was that I had to say. They were quite enthusiastic about having to be here, especially the member for Nepean. I know he hangs on every word I speak. I wish sometimes after listening to me that he paid attention and took into account some of the worthwhile advice that I had to offer him.

When I left off last night, I was talking about the impact that this lobbyists registration legislation might have had if it had been implemented three years ago after this government had been elected. They made the promise that they were going to introduce this legislation. We've waited all this time to finally see it and now that we see it and have a chance to scrutinize it, we have to ask ourselves, would it have made any difference if it had been introduced three years ago?

One of the things we have to ask ourselves is, would it have stopped the consultants involved in the Niagara casino bid from advising both the government and the successful bidder on the project? Would it have stopped Conservative insider Leslie Noble from selling her lobbying services to Ontario Hydro for \$84,000? Would it have stopped Conservative insider Tom Long from getting a contract for \$250,000, US I might add, to find the new chief executive officer for Ontario Hydro? Would it have stopped the scandal of contracts for highway repairs going to a company that hired the ministry official who set up this privatization initiative?

Would it do anything to rein in the many, many former aides and advisers to Premier Mike Harris, starting with Bill King, Ed Arundel, Mitch Patten and many others who are now either seeking government contracts or working as consultants for companies that seek out government contracts? I ask whether this legislation —

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): What about you getting government contracts?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean.

Mr Lessard: I ask whether this legislation would have made any difference whatsoever with respect to those incidents that we've raised time after time after time in this Legislature.

Before I came up this evening to speak, I was downstairs at the Canadian Co-operative Association lobbying efforts and we all know that there is a necessity for there to be people who are organized, who are going to try and influence our decision-making, and we want to ensure always that when we're making decisions in this place, we're doing so in the public interest.

There are always people who are going to organize and to try and exert greater influence on the decisions that we make in this place. That's to be expected. We're in the business of making decisions, passing legislation, passing regulations. People who are going to be impacted by those decisions are going to want to try and influence the decisions that we make. But it's important to us to ensure that when we're making those decisions, we're doing so in the public interest and we're not doing so for our own personal financial interest or for the financial interests of those lobby groups which may benefit from it but for the public at large.

The Canadian Co-operative Association is involved in many important endeavours that I believe are in the public interest. One of the things that they're involved in are the Cooperative Housing Federation of Canada. Their role is to be involved in providing affordable housing for

Canadians, something that the NDP government when they were in power agreed with. We see now that there is a crisis in social housing. There are people living on the street. This winter, I'm afraid that people who are without housing are going to die as a result of not being able to have access to affordable housing. Why? Because this government doesn't see the role of government in providing affordable housing for people in Ontario, and I say shame. They should recognize the importance of that role.

In Windsor we have a great example of a co-operative housing initiative. We have Solidarity Tower, for example, an initiative that was established by Charlie Brooks, the president of CAW Local 444. As one of his most prized initiatives he pursued the provision of affordable housing for people in our community, a very lofty goal. He didn't benefit from it personally. He wasn't in the construction business. He wasn't in the development business. He was in the business of ensuring that people were provided with affordable housing.

Also, the Canadian Co-operative Association is involved in the Co-operators Group Ltd insurance companies, Credit Union Central — I'm a member of a credit union myself; I was formerly a board member of Motor City Community Credit Union in the city of Windsor — who ensure that any profits derived from the business they do are reinvested back into their community and don't provide benefits for shareholders in other parts of Canada or in Europe, Japan or Asia or other parts of the world, but make sure that their reinvestment is in our own community. I think that's important.

1840

They also represent the Ontario Worker Co-op Federation and the Ontario Natural Foods Co-op and also were involved in the initiatives to provide co-operative energy. As well, there's a major wind-powered project they're involved in on Toronto Island that I'm quite interested in as part of my responsibility as critic for the Ministry of Energy and the initiatives that are taken with respect to Bill 35.

We want to make sure that people who are on the Toronto Renewable Energy Co-op have an opportunity to be able to participate in the opportunities this government says are going to present themselves as a result of Bill 35. They're going to present opportunities for renewable energy.

Green power: This government says the marketplace will determine whether green power is going to have a market in Ontario. We all know that when it comes to the unfettered marketplace, things like protection of the environment and the provision of social benefits like health care, education and even housing are going to go by the wayside.

Direct government involvement, encouragement and intervention is going to ensure that those opportunities remain available for people like the Toronto Renewal Energy Co-op, because we know that the energy they produce is probably going to be more expensive than energy that's produced by dirty, coal-fired plants in the Ohio Valley or maybe even in Detroit, like the Conners

Creek power plant that we fought so hard to prevent from starting up running this summer.

When it comes to the marketplace, the marketplace will determine that people will try to choose the cheapest source of energy available. Unless the government provides encouragement or opportunities for people who are going to provide green power, the prevalence of dirty, coal-fired power is going to emerge. That's going to be bad for our environment. It's going to present a tremendous impact on our health care system, because people are going to get lung-related or bronchial-related illnesses as a result of bad air, and we're all going to have to pay the price for that, because they're going to need health care services as a result.

Everyone has an interest in the outcome. The public has an interest, but of course there are many who can benefit directly, financially, from the deregulation of Ontario Hydro, and that's where lobby groups are going to become involved. Because of the incredible sums of money that can be raised or will become the result of the deregulation of Ontario Hydro, there are going to be a number of well-paid, well-organized lobbyists who are going to be involved. We've seen that during our committee hearings this past summer.

We need to balance the public interest against the interests of lobbyists and their clients. This is what the government tries to present to us as the rationale for introducing this bill, Bill 69, the lobbyists registration legislation. I think people need to scrutinize that. Would it make any difference in the way the government has initiated its legislative agenda in the last three years? I'm not sure it really would.

I have some real concerns with respect to Bill 69, and they're concerns I'm expressing not only on my own behalf but on behalf of my constituents and on behalf of my family, on behalf of my young son, Brett, who I hope is watching this evening to see his father in action in the Legislature.

Mr Baird: Hi, Brett.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): Hi, Brett.

Mr Lessard: Hi, Brett.

I believe I do the work that I do here on behalf of my constituents and on behalf of my family, and when I look at Bill 69 I look at some of the concerns I have. I think the regulation of lobbyists by and large is a good idea. I think we need to try to control those vested interests, those special interests that this government attacks on such a regular basis; it attacked them during the election campaign, saying we were too much influenced by special interests. Maybe that's the case, but is this lobbyists registration bill going to make any difference with respect to that? That's the question we need to concern ourselves with.

Some of the things I'm concerned about are in clause 3(2)(c). That section of the legislation talks about who this act doesn't apply to. Specifically, it says that it doesn't apply with respect to "any oral or written submission made to a public officer holder by an individual on behalf

of a person, partnership or organization, in direct response to a written request from a public office."

That means that any time the government asks for somebody's opinion, they're not covered by this legislation. That opens the door wide to anybody whom the government decides they want to ask for their opinion to provide whatever opinions may be in the best interests of their clients without any restriction whatsoever. That is a section of this legislation that needs to be amended. That is a major loophole, that if somebody is invited to make submissions to the government somehow they're completely exempt from the operation of this legislation. That's wrong.

Subsection 4(1) says, in respect to the registration of consultant lobbyists — and I think there's one thing we agree to, and that is that lobbyists should register. We don't have any problem with that. But let's determine what the responsibilities are of lobbyists who do register, what sort of regulation they have to comply with when they do and what sort of criteria they need to meet.

In this subsection, it says that a lobbyist needs to file their return with the registrar not later than 10 days after they start their lobbying. Well, who knows what happens within that 10 days? By the time they need to file their registration, they could have done all of their lobbying, achieved the decision they set out trying to achieve on behalf of their clients, contracts may have been signed, sealed and delivered, and by the time the public becomes aware of what has happened, it's game over, it's too late for anybody to be able to have any influence. That's a section that needs to be changed. There shouldn't be any 10-day grace period for the registration of lobbyists who engage in campaigns. They should have to register before or, at least, when they begin their lobby campaign.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we don't have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Could you check if we have a quorum, please.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

1850

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Windsor-Riverside.

Mr Lessard: I was referring to the legislation, Bill 69, An Act to amend the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 and to enact the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998, and talking about some of the concerns I had with this bill, notwithstanding that we in the NDP think the registration of lobbyists is a good idea.

In subsection 11(3), it talks about access to this registry. Once the lobbyists have to register, there is a requirement. There should be an opportunity for the public to have access to this information. There should be a positive duty on the government to ensure that people have access to this information. There should be an obligation to do outreach into the community, the way the Environmental Bill of Rights operates, for example. I was pleased to be part of the putting into place of that. It puts on to the Environmental Commissioner a positive duty to do out-

reach, to go out into communities to make sure that people are aware of the ability they have to respond to environmental legislation, regulations, policies and applications.

In this legislation, it says simply that "The registry shall be available for public inspection in the manner and during the time that the registrar may determine." That is a real restriction on public accessibility, to find out who is lobbying the government, why they are lobbying the government and what they expect to achieve as a result of those efforts. That section of the legislation should be amended to place a positive responsibility on the government to make sure that they outreach into communities to make sure that people have an opportunity to find out who is lobbying the government.

The other sections I have concern with are the regulation sections, and that's not unusual with this government. On occasion, we have seen them try to pass regulation-making powers that actually override the legislation. We know how inappropriate that is. Luckily, they didn't try to do that in this bill, but what it does say is that "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations" — this is section 18, Speaker, that I am referring to. I know you are following along closely. It says in clause (a) that they can pass regulations exempting any person who is appointed from the definition of "public office holder." This means they can say that any person who is in government, who is on a crown board or commission or agency, can be exempt from the operation of this legislation. They pass this legislation, tell us how good it is and how much it's going to protect the public interest, and then they give themselves the opportunity to exempt everybody from its operation. That is wrong and needs to be changed.

Clause 18(d) says they can pass regulations requiring a fee to be paid for the filing of these registrations. As I indicated, we don't have any objection to legislation that requires the registration of lobbyists. But I mentioned the Canadian Co-operative Association as a lobby group which was lobbying all of us this evening for many of the fine initiatives they are involved in. There are a number of lobbyists who lobby on behalf of the homeless, for example; lobby on behalf of health care providers; lobby on behalf of people who are providing public education; lobby on behalf of initiatives we think are important taking place in our communities.

The setting of fees must ensure that people who are doing work like that aren't eliminated from the process by setting those fees so high that they don't have any opportunity whatsoever to be able to lobby governments. If that's what this government is trying to do, to say that the only people who are going to lobby the government are the ones who can pay these fees, and "We're going to be the ones who will set these fees, and we're going to set them so high that only the people who have the most money are going to be able to register and lobby the government," that is wrong. I hope that's not what this legislation is trying to do. We want to ensure that there is some limit on the fees lobbyists have to pay to register so that the fee-making power doesn't become an impediment to people who want to have some ability to influence the

decisions of government but who may not have the financial resources to do so.

That's really what it comes down to, and that's really our concern: that far too often we see that the decisions made by this government are influenced by people who have the money, who have the power, who know the people who know the people who can direct the decisions that are made by this government. Quite often that isn't in the public interest, and it's those people who are directly impacted by the decisions of government who don't often find the ability to come here, to meet with their MPP, to meet with a cabinet minister. They don't belong to any organization. They're not affiliated with anybody who is able to get meetings with ministers. They are just impacted by the decisions we make here and feel quite often that they don't have any influence whatsoever on the decisions being made except at election time.

We in the NDP feel that people need to be able to influence the decisions we make here on a regular basis. This is a democracy that we are involved in. We need to encourage people to be involved in that democratic process. If we don't do that, then I don't think we are serving the public we represent.

We have seen this government get elected on the basis of promising to provide a tax cut. Their phony tax scheme really provides a benefit only to those who are the most well-off, and you can consider the people who are the most well-off to be the most well-organized, well-funded and the best-equipped to lobby the government. We need to make sure that the public in general get represented in this process and that people aren't marginalized in their ability to influence the decisions we make in this place. This shouldn't be a place where those who have the most money are the ones who are able to have the most influence on our decisions. That shouldn't be the case at all. Far too often I think this is the problem with the current government.

1900

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we've lost quorum again.

The Acting Speaker: Please check if we have a quorum.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I just want to thank the honourable member for Windsor-Riverside for his remarks. I know he was sincere in his comments on the Lobbyists Registration Act. I think it's a shame that his colleague twice in the last 20 minutes has interrupted him for a quorum call. Yes, it is his colleague's right to call a quorum, but there is a co-op reception going on, and members of all parties are trying to get down to that at the same time. But this is part of our government. We allow more time for debate than either the Liberals did during their time in office or the NDP during their time, so we will suffer through.

Although I think the member for Windsor-Riverside had some valid points to make about the legislation, I want to point out that the legislation is consistent with the federal legislation, which has been serving the federal Parliament very well over the past few years.

He talked about cost of registration. This legislation is for people who get paid — they're professional lobbyists — big dollars to lobby all of us in government, no matter what side of the House we're on, so believe me, they can afford the small registration fee. This registration scheme is about protecting the public and protecting the politicians from undue influence from such paid lobbyists.

The honourable member mentioned at the beginning of his remarks Bill King, Leslie Noble and Ontario Hydro. It's unfortunate he believes everything he reads. I have seen the Toronto Star, the Financial Post and CITY-TV do stories about those individuals lobbying me as Minister of Energy, Science and Technology about the Energy Competition Act and the opening up of the energy market, which has the consensus of the people of Ontario. It's a very positive thing for jobs and the economy.

I just want to place on the record that Leslie Noble and I have not spoken personally in some eight months. I don't know who she's lobbying, but keep up the good work, Mr Lessard and those media outlets that perpetuate this, because her fees go up every time she's accused of having the inside track with the government.

Secondly, Bill King is doing an honourable job in respecting his prohibition from lobbying the government during his one year out, and he has not spoken with me about his clients that are in the energy sector. I just wanted to put that on the record.

I don't know who they're lobbying except some fictitious scarecrows that —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Member for St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): It was interesting to hear the minister say that Bill King now has an honourable job. I don't know whether I'm supposed to infer from that that the job he had in the Premier's office was dishonourable or something. I'm going to tell Bill next time —

Hon Mr Wilson: He's doing an honourable job of respecting the law.

Mr Bradley: I'm glad you clarified that, because I was going to have to phone Bill to ask him what the difference would be between the job he had before and the one he has now and whether it's honourable enough.

I think the member for Windsor-Riverside raises a significant issue when he mentions the potential for a new tax increase, in other words, a registration fee. I have now counted some 397 tax increases by the Conservative government so far. He will remember, as I do, that Premier Harris, when he was in opposition, said that a user fee is in fact a tax, and any one of these charges is a tax. I have now counted 397 increases in taxes by this government, by their own admission, because the Premier said a user fee is a tax.

I get worried that if the amount were high enough — yes, I accept the fact that some of the rich firms that employ people at a high rate of pay might well be able to pay it, but some of the firms which are very modest in terms of the amount of money they might have available to them and are unable to pay their so-called lobbyist a significant amount of money might well feel that if the fee were large enough, it would be a deterrent to them, so that only those who represent the powerful and the richest people in our society could afford to have lobbyists working for them, while others of modest means would be left out in the cold.

Mr Bisson: I want to comment on one aspect of the presentation made by the member for Windsor-Riverside. I think he made a lot of really good points about some of the things that are somewhat problematic around the legislation. Although the legislation itself is going in the right direction, he talked about how yet again this government is using this registration of lobbyists as another opportunity to collect a user fee. I don't know, but I think most members around this House, especially in the opposition, and certainly the public are starting to realize that.

When the government talked about the tax cut they were going to give people, 30% of the provincial share, people really expected they were going to get those dollars and they were going to put them in their pockets. I think a lot of people voted for the Conservatives in the election of 1995 on the basis that they were going to get that money and they were going to put it in their wallets and they were going to go out and spend it.

People are starting to recognize that the 30% tax cut ain't going too far when you add up all the user fees that this government is putting on people. We're seeing tuition fee increases that are huge, prescription user fees going up. In my riding, I got a bunch of complaints last week from local business people who are seeing an increase. You know when you put a sign on the side of the highway that says, "Welcome to the City of Timmins," or "Wood-green Trailers," or whatever you're trying to advertise? You used to pay \$60 a year for the rental on that property so that you would be able to put the sign up there. Do you know how much it's going up to? It will be \$275 next year, over \$60 that you paid this last year.

People are starting to realize that when you start stacking all these user fees one on top of the other, that measly little tax cut you got doesn't amount to a heck of a lot, because you're finding out you're paying more in user fees and increased property taxes than you ever got with the tax cut. I think the member for Windsor-Riverside hit the nail on the head. This is another hidden tax increase.

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I'm pleased to make some comments and questions on the speech given by the member for Windsor-Riverside. The member began his speech last night, and I'm glad he had the opportunity to —

Mr Bisson: On a point of order: I believe we've lost quorum again.

The Acting Speaker: Please check if we have a quorum.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay.

Mr Grimmett: As I was saying, the member last night began his speech and he didn't seem to be on the bill very much, but I think overnight he read the bill. I will congratulate him. He actually made some decent suggestions in going through the bill, and I wanted to comment on a couple of those.

He mentioned clause 3(2)(c), which deals with the exemptions. That's specifically given to people who we as members would typically reach out to and ask for comments on proposed policy decisions or policy suggestions we have. As the member said while he was speaking, later in his speech, our job is to encourage public input, to encourage public discussion about ideas we have. I don't think it would be appropriate for us to require those people who respond to our written inquiries to register. That's why we have followed the federal legislation in setting up section 3. As was mentioned by my colleague earlier, the federal legislation appears to be working well and it has been in place for over 10 years.

The other issue with regard to access, I want to assure the member that the plan of the ministry, if this legislation receives the approval of the House, is to implement an Internet location for the registry to make it more available to the public, very similar to what is in place, the same provisions as in the federal legislation.

1910

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Member for Windsor-Riverside, you have two minutes.

Mr Lessard: I want to thank the members who responded to my remarks with respect to Bill 69. The member for Simcoe West was very eloquent in his defence of people like Bill King and the work that they've done in lobbying this current government to try and achieve the results for their big money interests, their corporate friends in making the decisions that this government has made, but I don't think he has been successful in his defence of people like Bill King.

He says that this legislation is modelled after the Liberal legislation in Ottawa, but that's not legislation that's without criticism. In the time that this legislation has been introduced, there hasn't been one single example of any contraventions of it. I would say that is legislation that is without teeth. The other is that I guess it's had such an incredible deterrent impact that nobody would ever think of infringing this lobbyist legislation, but I don't think that is possibly the case.

The member for St Catharines makes a good point in the fact that this government has said in the run-up to the campaign that a user fee is a tax, but now we see the downloading of the government deficit on the students, we see it on the hospital boards, we see it on the school boards, we see it on the municipalities. How can it make any common sense to download the provincial government debt on to the backs of those who are least able to pay it?

The member for Cochrane South talked about the user fees that this government has brought into place —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I'll be sharing my time with the member for Nepean.

This legislation, as has just recently been pointed out by the member for Simcoe West and the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay, is consistent with federal legislation. One of the few things that the federal government has done in the last few years that I agree with is the registration of lobbyists. With the passing —

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. I'm going to interrupt you. You need unanimous consent to share your time with the member for Nepean. Just ask for unanimous consent.

Mr Barrett: I wish to ask for unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed?

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): No.

The Acting Speaker: I heard a no from your side. So that's it, it's not unanimous consent.

Mr Lessard: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Would you check if we have quorum.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Norfolk.

Mr Barrett: With respect to the federal legislation it was 1989 that the Lobbyists Registration Act was passed and this statute was amended in 1996. At that time, the federal government became the first political body in Canada to legislate this type of registry for lobbyists.

It is fitting that Ontario becomes the second jurisdiction to enact this type of legislation with Bill 69, the Lobbyists Registration Act, and indeed it is time. I believe that the debate on Bill 69 last night and today from the member for Windsor-Riverside has been helpful and constructive. I too have a young son named Brett, although I feel by now he and his little sister are probably watching The Simpsons after what's gone on in the last hour or so in the Legislature.

I wish to speak from my previous experience when I was a newly elected MPP and I arrived at Queen's Park. I had never seen so much mail from so many special interest groups. As MPP, I soon came to learn that almost every occupation had an association or a union or a hired gun who knew their way around the Pink Palace better than I did.

For me, it started with the swearing-in ceremony in June 1995. I remember the would-be lobbyist with a megaphone out front. All through the ceremony this person would repeat over and over again the mantra, "Embarrass Harris." It is obvious to me now that that person was probably one of those who stood to lose if the Harris government did what it said it would do.

We said we would cut taxes. This meant there would be less money for lobbyists to tap into.

We said we would cut non-priority government spending. Again, less choice for lobbyists to figure out which grant to go for next.

We said we would cut government barriers to job creation and cut the size of government, less government. Again, lobbyists would have a positive —

Mr Bradley: What's this got to do with the bill?

Mr Barrett: We're speaking about lobbyists. It would be a positive effect for them and enhance their ability to find their way through the previous maze of bureaucracy and red tape more easily.

We said we would balance the budget. This meant government will stop spending money that it doesn't have on programs that aren't essential.

I'm sure there are a number of lobbyists who have lost out because of the Common Sense Revolution. Because the Ontario government is determined to balance the budget and break away from the lost decade of taxing and spending money we didn't have as taxpayers, many lobbyists knew that there would be less money available for their specific cause.

In August 1995, right after the election, I wrote to the Honourable Allan Rock, Minister of Justice at the time, questioning procedures for lobbying Ontario MPPs. Many letters forwarded to me had been stamped "Received by the Minister of Justice." I wish to read one letter that I sent to Mr Rock, and I quote:

"I, along with at least one other member, have been supplied with a package of information regarding Bill C-68 by the Coalition for Gun Control. The Coalition for Gun Control provided over 72 letters and other documents which support their position. Another one dozen letters included in their package are stamped as being 'Received by the Minister of Justice.'

"...the question arose, 'Is the Coalition for Gun Control being assisted by the Minister of Justice while lobbying provincial politicians on the minister's behalf?'"

"...Now that I have the letters favouring gun control I would therefore request that the justice minister provide to this office copies of all correspondence received from municipalities, groups and organizations who have opposed Bill C-68."

This intrusive legislation from the federal government was justified on the basis of unscientific opinion polls sponsored by the federal government and the anti-gun lobby. A MacKenzie Institute study, entitled Canadian Attitudes Towards Gun Control: The Real Story, provides compelling evidence that these polls were designed to manufacture consent for the government's policies by deliberately misleading the public and the media.

Therefore, because of these lobbying tactics there is an element of intellectual dishonesty about this legislation. It allows the federal government to give the appearance of action on an important social issue without doing anything substantial to deal with the real problems of violent crime and violent criminals.

I go back to when I was newly arrived at Queen's Park. I was amazed at the number of receptions, meetings, requests for interviews, letters, conversations, packages, submissions, faxes, demonstrations, e-mails and phone calls that my staff and I had to deal with. However, I was not quite naive enough to believe that all of these people

were just as happy about my election win as I was. Many of these people, whom I had never heard from before, were often after one thing: either the public's money or perhaps the public's favour.

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I remain proud to be a Mike Harris Conservative. To this day, I can say that our government is acting in an open and accountable manner and doing what it said it would do. I am proud to be part of the group that helped break Ontario's tax-and-spend habit. After a decade of tax-and-spend governments — governments that kept two sets of books — the public now has a much broader and informed picture of how the province spends its money.

With Bill 69, we are asking that anyone who receives funding from the government or a government agency discloses the fact, including the amount of funding. Is the group itself doing the lobbying or has it hired a professional lobbyist? Is this where we are paying government money to be lobbied to pay more government money? This has to be the biggest insult to all taxpayers. Some of these organizations have been investigated and some of these groups exist to get more money out of government to pay their salaries so they can come back and get more money out of government to pay their salaries again in subsequent years. We are asking that this be made open. We want to know whether government is paying people to try and get more money from it. This should be out in the open. If this is happening, we want to know about it.

One issue in my riding concerns the anti-tobacco lobby that has developed in recent years. A couple of key lobby groups especially raise the ire of constituents in Norfolk, most notably the Non-Smokers' Rights Association. I have here a report on the Non-Smokers' Rights Association that I got through the federal registry that's already in place, the registry to register lobbyists.

Just to give you an idea how useful the information can be, the executive director of the Non-Smokers' Rights Association is a fellow named Clifford Mahood. It's a non-profit, public health organization. It also has a related charitable status organization titled Smoking and Health Action Foundation, whose mandate is to conduct research and public education. This organization is funded by taxpayers' money through Health Canada to the tune of \$350,000.

There is much work to be done by lobbyists that is in close connection with charities. I don't feel any member here would argue that we want charities to be very transparent and upstanding community citizens. The separation of the two very different types of organizations is very important.

I have a report as well from the MP for Hamilton-Wentworth, John Bryden, who in 1996 put together a presentation. He talks about the Non-Smokers' Rights Association and a charity, the Smoking and Health Action Foundation. These two organizations shared the same address and were run by the same chief executive officer.

In his report Mr Bryden stated that it appeared that the charity's revenues, mostly in the form of government grants, were also being used to pay the salaries for the

lobbyist group. These two organizations, one a lobby group and one a charity, were sharing offices, personnel and funding. These people were contravening the federal income tax law, I understand, and this story appeared in the media. Again without the openness into the actions and funding of lobbyists like this, we can never know what's really going on.

In Norfolk there's another group that's growing. It's basically a lobby against the anti-tobacco lobby because of the importance of tobacco farming in our area. This group calls itself Citizens for Rights and Freedoms and is led by a local Delhi business person, John Varga. As MPP for tobacco country, I represent the views of tobacco farmers and business people. Many area businesses and municipalities in my riding want the decision to smoke or not to be left up to adults, not necessarily politicians or lobbyists. More specifically, some businesses want the choice of not posting no smoking signs. This group would be happy to register as a lobbyist and also bring to everyone's attention the fact that they do not receive \$350,000 from the federal government as does the Non-Smokers' Rights Association.

Again, so many of these lobby groups have a very narrow focus. I feel it hampers our decision-making. They cannot see the big picture and cannot necessarily give government sound advice that applies to anything beyond the small sector of their concern. The anti-smoking lobby, largely funded by governments, has had a tremendous economic impact on my riding. Smoking is a risk-for-pleasure trade and again the feeling is, leave that decision up to politicians, leave it up to adults, not to lobbyists.

What if we didn't have this legislation? I do not know at this time, at second reading, how many lobbyists are trying to influence government decision-making in Ontario. I do not know who they are and, more importantly, to whom they are speaking.

Let's consider the issue of so-called grassroots lobbying campaigns where a large number of members of the public may be persuaded to send letters or make telephone calls or send in faxes. I'm thinking of the megacity debate and also the efforts of teacher unions to influence Bill 160. In both cases, my fax machine at Queen's Park was tied up for days on end. Many such grassroots campaigns are organized by lobbyists. Under Bill 69, lobbyists will be required to indicate if they used or expect to use grassroots communication in an attempt to influence the government.

Having an open system requires achieving the right balance. This bill is about balance. It is about achieving the proper equilibrium. If we do not want any lobbyists at all, I am quite prepared to admit this bill does not go far enough because it does not outlaw lobbying. But it is intended to ensure that the activities of lobbyists are sufficiently transparent to ensure the integrity of our system and yet to not impose upon officials or bureaucrats obligations that are so onerous that they would be in a position where they'd rather not talk to anybody in the outside world.

We all know that it is sometimes necessary to get professional advice or assistance from organizations. This is

a useful function. Often governments need to consult organizations like the Canadian Manufacturers' Association or in my area the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, for example.

It is very important in dealing with this issue to preserve openness so that ordinary citizens can see very clearly that elected officials responsible for running the government are free of any dishonest or undue influence. Legislation in this area must be very clear and there must be specific rules to ensure this openness. The key principle is that decisions must not only be proper, they must also be made openly and legally without any undue influence.

This has an impact not only on the quality of decisions but also, in my view, on the quality of democratic life in any society because citizens who believe that parliamentarians are influenced by all kinds of hidden forces over which they have little control may feel that their role as citizens is less important than it should be and that they may not take part in democratic life to the extent that they should.

Our aim is to rebuild trust in government which has been eroded to a considerable extent over the last number of years under previous governments, both Liberal and NDP. We want to increase the openness, the accountability and the disclosure required so citizens can see more clearly what is happening. Hopefully, the more they know the more we will move forward towards a more true democracy.

We are elected and sent to the Legislature to represent our constituents, but sometimes the decisions are being made in smaller rooms elsewhere. How did lobbyists gain such a large influence, as described last night by the member for Renfrew North? The way one influences government policy is by getting to the decision-makers. The decision-makers are the top bureaucrats, the deputy ministers, ministers, our Premier.

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Taxpayers and constituents from across Ontario have lost some confidence in government for several reasons. One only has to look to the past — the lost decade — to find many reasons to lose one's confidence in government. Bill 69 is designed to ensure a certain level of openness, to show everyone what the power brokers in Toronto or Ottawa are really doing behind the scenes. In any case, the objective of Bill 69 is to make all lobbyists or influence peddlers, as some people refer to them, accountable; to make their work at Queen's Park more transparent; to show people that in the end government was justified in doing business with a given individual, whether it be through changing regulations, drafting a bill or anything else, bidding on a contract, by way of example.

The United States pioneered legislation on lobbying many years ago. Its emphasis is on disclosure, the bringing out into the open of particular interest groups involved in any piece of legislation and trying to assess what that interest group represents. Are the interests they represent substantial or are they merely vocal?

One thing that is objectionable is covert lobbying, the covert exercise of pressure. I do not think this is what is involved for most of this.

I want to make clear that what we are targeting here is more accountability and less backroom politics. The bill recognizes the reality of interest groups. They do bring forward a particular cause or case to parliamentarians; secondly, they are entitled to do so; thirdly, they should bring forward proper information, properly researched, and members themselves should exercise the necessary care in reading reports and making decisions.

Intelligent legislation demands that interest groups bring forward their claims and their causes. I have no problem with the professional interest groups, with companies, trade unions, public housing groups, as has been mentioned, or with other groups that come forward to me. I do have some problems with so-called umbrella organizations, which claim to represent much broader segments of society.

Once again, our goal is for people to say they believe now those lobbying activities are transparent. They will be able to find out about them. They will be able to find out who is lobbying whom, what they are being paid, what the conditions are and what their connections are.

The average Ontarian has lost trust in government, lost trust in our bureaucracy. Bill 69 gives us an opportunity to ask ourselves, who exactly is running this government and past governments? Is it the people represented through elected representatives or is it special interests?

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Bradley: I noted some of the points the member made and his favourite lobbying groups as opposed to those who are not to be favoured. I guess how we define whether we like these lobbyists or not sometimes depends on what they're saying.

The question I ask is, if this legislation was so compelling, if it was so urgent, why did it take the government so long to bring it into effect? Here we are in the fourth year of the mandate now, very close to an election. I can tell it's close to an election, because I was watching the Minister of Health on TV tonight being interviewed on CBC, and where she had made an announcement six months ago about some allocation of funding for emergency care in hospitals, she was very close, she said, to making a very definitive statement within the next couple of weeks. So I can tell an election is near.

As the election comes near and the government has been so much under fire for the kind of lobbying that is going on behind closed doors and elsewhere, the government finally, after being badgered by the opposition so often, and after announcing this about four different times, has finally brought forward legislation, which in some respects is supportable and in some respects needs some considerable improvement.

I should say to the member, and I'll elaborate on this in my own remarks later on, that we have to worry much more about the lobbyists lobbying the unelected members than the elected members. You'll know who I mean: the whiz kids in the Premier's office and in the offices of various ministers; the people who would claim, when the members are not listening, to be much brighter than they and much more knowledgeable and much more in tune

with what is needed for the future of Ontario. So I'll be looking carefully at them lobbying those unelected people.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I have just a few comments. The previous speaker talked about the lobbying act. We have to understand that this act deals with another piece of legislation as well, which hasn't been debated very much — and I don't know why; the two pieces are included together, revising the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, and bringing in a new act at the same time. The member talked about his concern that he was being lobbied so much by different organizations and agents out there.

Mr Bradley: The Canadian Manufacturers' Association.

Mr Len Wood: Sure. There will be all kinds of lobbying going on, as the member for St Catharines mentioned, as we get closer to an election and we find out that a year and a half ago announcements were made about health care funding and funding for education and it's all being withheld. I watched the same TV program where the Minister of Health was saying, "Yes, we announced it six months ago, but in a few more days, maybe a few more weeks, we'll be able to lay it out and set a date for it."

As we get closer to the election, we're going to see more and more announcements being made and the people who have been lobbying this particular Conservative government, whether it's the elected members or whether it's the backroom boys, the whiz kids, lobbying them to make sure they can be in good shape to get elected again.

We don't have a real concern with people registering as being lobbyists so that people will be able to open up the binder and take a look and say, "Oh, yes, so-and-so has been a lobbyist, and he's working for this person or that person or this organization." But it's the ones who have benefited from the large tax cut who are really happy with what this government is doing.

Mrs Johns: I'd like to congratulate the member for Norfolk. I thought his presentation told us a lot about how he felt coming to Queen's Park and his introduction to the lobby groups that are very strong around the Pink Palace here. His story about the election, about the people outside the building, about the people who come into the building to talk to us, is something the average Ontarian is very concerned about in the province. They're concerned about accountability and transparency, as the member for Norfolk talked about.

Each of us, before we came into politics, was cognizant that some of us could call up our MPPs and say what we thought but other people might be exerting influence that was above and beyond that call. The member for the NDP talked a few minutes ago about how this might include people who want to call their MPP and talk, and of course that's not the case. We're trying here to talk about the lobbyists who are out there trying to change decisions, trying to talk to government and bureaucratic people and change the course of policy in the province.

The people of Ontario will be pleased when they get a chance to look at this legislation because, as the member said, it will give us a clearer understanding of what true democracy should be about if we know who is coming to

an agent or an elected individual whom we elected, how much they're being paid and what they're lobbying for. It will also give accountability and transparency. It's my hope that it will give us a confidence in our elected officials that seems to be waning at this time. It's important that we clear the air and let everyone know who we're talking to and why we're talking to them. I think the people of Ontario will be pleased with this legislation.

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Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I'd like to comment briefly on the member's comments as well. I have to say that if this legislation had been introduced three and a half years ago, perhaps everyone would have been much happier and would have looked at this piece of legislation from a different point of view, and perhaps we in this House, in the opposition, and even the people outside would have given more credit to this piece of legislation than three and a half years later.

There must have been a reason why this legislation was not introduced three and a half years ago. But they said this thing, that they introduced it now but they won't do anything until we are in the lead-up to the next election, only under the pretence of doing the best for the public. But this solely will be serving the purpose of the government, for no other reason.

It's funny. It's so hypocritical when they say that this is following the guidelines of the federal plan. It is not following the federal plan. There are loopholes in this piece of legislation to drive 10 Titanics through. It means there is a lot of room for the Premier, the minister, the deputy minister to say, "We are going to make some exceptions."

Isn't that wonderful that we can talk to the people out there who elected them and elected us and we can say that we introduced this piece of legislation for the benefit of the public. Then they say, "Oops, we are going to give ourselves some loopholes so deputy ministers, ministers and the Premier can do at any time whatever they want by simple regulation." I beg to differ.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Norfolk, you have two minutes.

Mr Barrett: The member for St Catharines posed the question: What took us so long? My observation over the last three years has been a consistent delay of legislation and slowing down of progress in the House. I return the question not only to the past Liberal government but also to the NDP government: What took us so long?

I understand this kind of legislation has been discussed in Ontario over the past 20 years. It's legislation whose time has truly come. I suggest that governments of all parties are responsible for not getting out of the gate sooner in this kind of approach.

It is a good approach. It's a check and balance against the kind of corruption that can so easily enter an open government system. What is happening in here right now is public debate. People like young Brett, on both sides of the House, can observe this if they wish. It's not going on behind closed doors or in small rooms. It can be read in Hansard; it can be read in the media. However, when it

comes to lobbying, that is often not public. Therefore we require a mechanism whereby the people at home can realize that lobbying is open and that taxpayers know that it truly can be a valid process.

I believe this bill deserves support of the Legislature without delay. When the bill comes back at third reading and we vote on it, can we rely on the support of all members? Otherwise, it would mean some of us would have sabotaged the bill ourselves. We have to make it work. This is about parliamentary integrity. This issue not only concerns the government; it concerns all of us in the House and concerns us in our role as MPPs.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bradley: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to speak, albeit only for 20 minutes under the new rules of the Legislative Assembly imposed in August.

Applause.

Mr Bradley: The Reform-a-Tories are all applauding wildly. The people who have been around here a while and recognize the importance of the democratic process haven't, but the rabid Reform-a-Tories are eager to simply shove all legislation through as quickly as possible.

I want to say that I too wonder why, since this is supposedly such a high priority, the government did not choose to bring this legislation forward earlier. Already we've had a little over three years of lobbying by some of the best-known Conservatives, who have made hundreds of thousands of dollars through their lobbying efforts, all of them I presume legal, because there is not legislation dealing with it, but have certainly had an influence of some considerable excess, I would say, on the legislative agenda of the government.

The people from the farm community would relate to this, that in fact the horses are out of the barn — or at least, if there are 10 horses, nine are out of the barn — before this legislation is being brought forward.

The legislation itself is supposedly patterned after federal legislation. I have never heard in this House so many Tory members latching on to something that has to do with the federal government as I have tonight. Perhaps there's a change of strategy, because of course the most recent strategy is to try to project blame elsewhere, to some other level of government. If it's the local government that has raised property taxes, Tory members are actively out saying to those members, "Well, of course, it's your local members. Go and see Niagara regional council," when in fact the downloading of responsibility from the provincial government to the local government is the cause of the need for more revenues for local government. Or they blame the federal government for something. They have to find somebody else to blame, the NDP or the Liberals or somebody else.

Legislation of this kind is, in my view, certainly overdue, and I think there are some changes that can be made to the legislation which would make it a better piece of legislation for all.

The legislation, it is said by the Conservative members, mirrors the federal standard, but it falls short, if you look at it carefully, in three key areas.

First of all, unlike the federal legislation, there is no code of conduct to cover lobbyists' activities. I think that's exceedingly important, that all lobbyists play by the same set of rules.

It reminds me of the circumstances we face in the environment today. Back when environmental legislation and regulations were in effect, were enforced, were followed through on, at least everybody knew there was a level playing field.

What I find interesting today is the number of people in the business sector who will complain not that the regulations are too onerous, but that somebody else has been able to, as a result of lobbying this government or for some reason, not live up to the standards that were established for these other companies which have already spent the money on a change in operations, a change in procedures, more staff, more resources and more equipment to avoid fouling the environment. When they see others getting a break, a new deregulation of some of these activities and a wink and a nod at some of those onerous responsibilities that are contained in legislation, they are annoyed, just as the general population is.

So I truly believe there is a need for a code of conduct to cover the lobbyists' activities.

It's interesting, the lobbyists that are chosen. The special interest groups, according to the government, are members of trade unions or other groups which may oppose this government. We don't hear them mention the Canadian Manufacturers' Association or the Fraser Institute or the taxpayers' coalition. By the way, I'm waiting for them to complain about your bombardment of the airwaves with advertising. I haven't heard them yet; I'm sure I will. Or the Canadian federation — what is it, the one Mr Brown was the head of, the Canadian federation which always complains about government expenditures?

Mr Grimmett: The independent business association.

Mr Bradley: No, not the independent business association, another one. Anyway, the national one where —

Mr Grimmett: The National Citizens' Coalition.

Mr Bradley: The National Citizens' Coalition. That's it. It seems to have a penchant for chasing NDP and Liberal governments but seems to be somewhat mute when it comes to criticism of Conservative governments, even when those governments are squandering millions of dollars on self-serving, blatantly political propaganda ads both in print and on the electronic airwaves.

So I believe there is a need for a code of conduct to cover lobbyists. That's contained in the federal legislation which you people are trumpeting. It's not in this legislation.

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Unlike the federal legislation, there are exemptions that can be granted by order in council. Order in council, for the people who watch and perhaps are not familiar with the terms of government, means the cabinet. By a simple cabinet decision, the entire Premier's office, ministers' offices and other sensitive departments can be exempt from the terms and conditions of the legislation, creating a huge loophole in that legislation.

I am distrustful of anything that involves governments being allowed to pass regulations instead of dealing with something in a legislative manner. What that means for the public and for those interested in the democratic system is that they do not have input ordinarily into the change of regulations. When we come to this House, even under the new draconian, strict rules which crunch debate, which limit debate, which remove from the opposition the opportunity to have some influence on the legislation which is passing, even with that, at least it comes before the House when it's in the form of a bill, to be debated in this House.

A regulation is not debated in this House. It is debated, if at all, behind closed doors, with cabinet and perhaps a few other members of government who have input, and of course that large retinue of whiz kids, the unelected 20-something and 30-something ideologues who dominate the Premier's office and the offices of various cabinet ministers and members of this government. So this exemption is something that I would like to see removed, very much.

Also unlike the federal legislation, there are no specific duties for the Integrity Commissioner to be responsible for. The role of the Integrity Commissioner to investigate and review complaints under this new lobbyist legislation is totally subject to the direction of cabinet. How can you possibly have the cabinet giving those kinds of directions? You know there are certain offices in government that should be totally independent. There are some things that shouldn't be; cabinet ministers are political people, and I understand that. For instance, the Minister of Health is going to have her own retinue of advisers and so on, political staff. I understand that. That's part of the process. That's not what I'm making mention of.

The Ombudsman, for instance, should be completely outside of the undue influence of members of government, of the cabinet simply dictating; or the Integrity Commissioner or other officers of the assembly, who are usually appointed, I might add — and this is good for our system — by consensus of the three political parties. What I believe we're seeing here is the politicization of this process, because the role of the Integrity Commissioner to investigate and review complaints under this new lobbyist legislation is totally subject to the direction of the cabinet. Obviously that should be changed.

The federal code of conduct, which was established to measure the activities of lobbyists, was drafted in a public process, first of all, not in a behind-closed-doors process, and provides a mechanism to monitor specific allegations of lobbying improprieties. The provincial legislation has no such code and therefore is much weaker.

The provincial legislation contains exemptions, as I have mentioned, which are not included in the federal legislation. Section 18 of the act allows for regulations to exempt "any person who is appointed to any office or body" and "exempting any officer, director or employee of any agency, board or commission of the crown." This is a huge exemption and, I suggest to members of the House, an unhealthy exemption.

If you wish to trumpet this bill as somehow blazing the trail for other provinces, you should take note of the lack

of teeth in it and some of the loopholes that are contained in this legislation.

The federal bill specifically included a role for the commissioner to review allegations of improprieties under the legislation. In Bill 69 there are references to expanded powers for the existing Integrity Commissioner with regard to the lobbyist provisions, but the specific duties are left to be requested by the Chair of Management Board and are precluded from being mentioned in the commissioner's annual report — once again a huge exemption.

What the government could have had before it would have been a piece of legislation of which it could be justifiably proud, and I think those of us in opposition would have had considerably more praise for this legislation had it not contained the lack of provision for teeth and the exemptions that are available. When it says the Chair of Management Board, that in essence means the Premier's office dictates what's in that.

This is certainly needed, but it doesn't prevent people from lobbying at the many fundraisers held by the Conservative Party, and it seems to me there's one every night. One thing you can say they're successful at is bringing in the dough. I've got to say that. I want to compliment you in some way I guess for being able to get all of the powerful interests, the very wealthiest people in the province, to contribute to your fund. Why wouldn't they? The policies that you have brought forward favour huge business interests, the corporate elite — the oil barons, for instance, that you refuse to call to account when they raise gas prices on the long weekends, and others.

Not only do we have the lobbyists, as I mentioned before, we have to worry about the lobbyists phoning their friends. When you have people who have served in the Premier's office or in ministers' offices who then phone that same government they served, you have to be worried that they have more influence than the average person involved in perhaps a community organization who wants to lobby. I'm sure the development industry has much more clout with this government over the Oak Ridges moraine, which is a beautiful area that should remain for the most part as it is. I'm sure the development lobby will be there large as life to try to persuade this government to remove the kind of restrictions which would preserve that kind of territory. So I understand why those coffers are full, and I worry that nobody will have to register when they head to the Tory fundraiser to be able to try to influence people.

I remember the club — what was the club? — the Cornerstone Club. The member for Kingston and The Islands raised in the House in a question to the Treasurer what happens when you join the Cornerstone Club. People say, "Don't parties have that?" Yes, they do. They have these clubs where people give a lot of money and they feel that they are part of the government, supporting the government. I understand people can do that, but you should have read the fine print. They had in italics the special consideration you get. You pay your 500 bucks

first of all to join the Conservative Cornerstone Club. Then, if you paid \$350 more, you got to sit in on a special session with the ministers and with the policy advisers to those ministers.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): To make decisions.

Mr Bradley: To make decisions, it said, and to get answers to the questions you always wanted to ask and couldn't. This is a special category. I don't mind them raising money, and people want to support the various political parties, I understand that. But boy, when you get into this, I wonder how this legislation is going to influence those people. Will it cover members of the Cornerstone Club who will show up at the Conservative convention, not for the regular session with everybody else but for this special session they'll have — I can't remember whether it's before or after the convention — with the Premier and the cabinet ministers and the policy advisers to help make the decisions?

I think there are probably more than 10 million people in Ontario now and they are wondering how they wouldn't have equal access. So does this legislation cover the Cornerstone Club where members pay \$500 and \$350 more to attend this special session? That's what I worry about when I see legislation of this kind which is trumpeted as being so useful.

This all fits in with the whole theme of what this government is about in terms of the exemptions I see in this legislation. It fits in because it fits in with the legislation the government brought forward which allows political parties in Ontario to receive far more in the way of donations from special interests out there, regardless of what those interests would be. All kinds more money may now come into the treasury, and of course, since the Conservative Party is in power and since it is serving the interests of the most powerful and richest people in our province, they're bound to get a lot of money. They have made a provision so they can collect even more money to be able to dominate the process. Not only that, they can now spend more on an individual candidate's campaign or on the province-wide campaign, so you can expect a bombardment of simple, hot-button TV commercials during the campaign. They'll saturate the hockey game or the baseball game, whatever it happens to be, or put them around newscasts, because that's what their American friends tell them. The Republicans tell them, "Put them around newscasts because that's when they're most effective."

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There they are, having lots of money to do this, allowing people to spend far more on a campaign, to shorten the length of the campaign so the kind of grass-roots door-to-door campaign is replaced by an expensive television campaign and full-page ad campaign that only this government and the Conservative Party can afford; that, when they've already got Conrad Black and his newspapers on their side, his owning a majority of the daily newspapers in this province.

Of course they've exempted, Mr Speaker, as you would know, many of the items, events and expenditures that used to be caught under the Election Finances Act, in other words, the restrictions on how much you can spend. Now the sky's the limit. They can spend as much as they want in those areas. They've abolished the election finances commission, which was specifically set up by the Conservative government of Bill Davis to monitor election expenditures.

We're going to see money play — and I say this is unhealthy — a far greater role in our political process. Just look south of the border to see if that's healthy, where the moneyed interests, or those who make donations, are able to influence the policy of government, or in that case, because you have your individual members of Congress, you can virtually buy members of Congress as individuals and have them vote the way you want, if you're a political action group of some kind.

Combine that with the government advertising program. I want to get into that, and I know, Mr Speaker, you also wanted me to get into the saturation bombing of the airwaves now by this government. I hate to suggest this, because they're liable to do it, but I'm wondering if, after this legislation passes — and it will, because the government has geared the rules of this House to make sure it'll pass just as they want it, complete with the exemptions, complete with the loopholes — there will be a huge propaganda campaign out there, full-page ads saying, "Look what we've done now."

This is all done with taxpayers' dollars. It is unethical, it is an abuse of public office and it is an abuse of the taxpayer, and I'll tell you, when the Ontario Taxpayers Federation gets wind of this, they are going to be on your case, and other groups of a national nature. I'm telling Jason Kenney about this and I'm going to tell Stephen Harper. I'm going to phone him and say: "Stephen, do you know what they're doing, what a Conservative government, a Reform-a-Tory government is doing in Ontario? They're squandering millions of dollars on self-serving, clearly political propaganda ads in the newspaper, on the radio and the airwaves and who knows where else?" Oh, yes, the pamphlets: Every time you open up the mailbox there's a new pamphlet coming from the government. I tell you, it's an abuse of the process, an abuse of public office.

This legislation, with some improvement, would be the kind of legislation that could pass with a pretty good consensus of this House, but there must be those improvements which I have outlined if the legislation is to be truly effective and truly serve the purpose that all of us want it to serve.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Len Wood: The member for St Catharines has raised a number of valid issues. If this Mike Harris government was so much concerned about bringing in lobbying legislation, why was it not brought in three years ago? We've had lobbyists around and lobbyists have been registered throughout all the provinces in Canada since back before 1800. Now all of a sudden, as we're getting

closer to an election, the Mike Harris government has privatized, they've contracted out, and a lot of money has gone into private hands as a result of this government downsizing and giving away government jobs to contractors and other organizations out there. There have been millions of dollars that have changed hands over the last three years. Now, as we get closer to an election, which we could hold within the next few months — whenever Mike Harris figures he's up enough in the polls, there will be an election and he'll be out there saying, "I brought in lobbying legislation," but we know for a fact that they have had it at the federal level for the last 10 years.

Even though we support this lobbying legislation, there might have to be some amendments or some changes to it, as the member for St Catharines has said. But in principle we think there's nothing wrong with it being out there. It's kind of weird that this government would wait until just before the election is being called to try to get first, second and third reading on lobbying legislation, just before they go out to the polls to ask for another mandate and after privatizing and contracting out a lot of services to their friends in the private sector, as they have done over the last few years.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): It's interesting to listen to the meanderings of the learned member for St Catharines. First off, he wants to contrast the difference between the codes of conduct, the one that is missing in the Ontario legislation with the one in the federal legislation.

Let's take a practical application of what that means in terms of code of conduct. I'm sure the honourable member for St Catharines has a fairly passing acquaintance with the previous defence minister federally, the Honourable Doug Young. The code of conduct there in Ottawa says — really, it's a big deal — that if you're a minister and you get defeated, you can't lobby your previous department. However, if you get a partner in Summa Strategies called Paul Zed, who helped to form the code of conduct, they can lobby the ministry of defence.

Secondly, and consequently, the member seems to forget that the Honourable Doug Young, in setting up Summa Strategies, which seems to be OK — it seems to be OK for a "Glib" to set up a lobbying organization, but there's something criminal when a PC sets up such an organization — managed to lobby Human Resources Development Canada and also the previous transport ministry. That's quite acceptable; that's part of the code of conduct. That's why we don't have it in this particular piece of legislation, because it's absolutely nothing but sugar-coating. It's useless when you look at the practical application of it.

The member for St Catharines is always going on about how we've changed the fundraising rules for campaign financing. I'm sure the Ontario "Gliberal" Party will take advantage of the new rules under which they can get more money. I'm waiting to see that they'll turn back the money from their corporate sector when we get to the campaign.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell): Je tiens à féliciter mon collègue de St Catharines. Il est

toujours intéressant à écouter, surtout lorsqu'il soulève des points comme il vient de soulever ce soir.

Il a soulevé le point que ce projet de loi aurait dû être présenté il y a trois ans. Depuis mon élection de 1995, le 8 juin, j'ai pu constater que nous avons de différents groupes qui viennent soulever des points, qui viennent faire du lobbying. Et puis toujours, nous nous apercevons que des anciens députés du gouvernement sont embauchés par des municipalités afin de faire du lobbying auprès des ministres afin d'obtenir davantage, et aussi, après avoir reçu des confirmations qu'il était impossible de recevoir les subventions additionnelles, les lobbyistes ont rapporté à certaines occasions, mais il faut dire que ça coûte très cher aux municipalités.

Aujourd'hui, avec ce projet de loi, nous allons pouvoir vérifier les documents et nous apercevoir qui sont les personnes payées directement par les municipalités, par les différents groupes de lobbyistes qui viennent faire de la pression auprès des ministres de ce gouvernement.

Nous savons que l'élection s'en vient peut-être dans six mois, peut-être dans 12 mois, peut-être même dans 18 mois, mais de plus en plus, si nous aurions mis en place ce projet de loi-là, le projet de loi 69, qui aurait contrôlé jusqu'à un certain point le lobbyiste, aujourd'hui peut-être que les municipalités auraient reçu leur juste part. Aujourd'hui nous voyons des municipalités qui ont reçu certains montants et d'autres qui n'ont pas reçu leurs montants. Nous n'avons qu'à regarder la formule que nous avons utilisée dans le domaine de l'éducation. Dans le secteur du premier ministre, dans le secteur du ministre des Finances, nous nous sommes aperçus qu'ils ont reçu des montants substantiels.

Ce sont les points, monsieur le Président.

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Mr Lessard: It's a pleasure to respond to the remarks from the member for St Catharines. I was watching very closely on the television monitors. Even though I wasn't here, I was paying close attention to what he had to say and I know he made some very important points. One was about this legislation being brought forward after the Tories have given out so many of their goodies through their privatization and deregulation agenda. He also mentioned how this is going to be introducing more user fees by the registration fees for lobbyists.

The member for Prescott-Russell was responding and making some good points about why it is that the Tories have waited so long to finally introduce this legislation. There's a good reason for that, and that is because the Tories wanted to make sure they were well on their way in their privatization agenda before they brought this legislation in. They wanted to make sure that their big corporate interests were able to benefit from their agenda.

The member for St Catharines talked about the influence of big, moneyed interests in the lobbying of government and how the average citizen, the residential consumer, the ordinary taxpayer, is going to be left out of this process while the rich are going to benefit.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for St Catharines, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr Bradley: Thank you very much for the kind input from all members of the Legislature on my remarks this evening.

Certainly the privatization agenda of this government will prove to be a bonanza for their friends in the private sector, those who are lining up, rubbing their hands, waiting for all the favours that will come from privatization.

Mr Hastings: You sound jealous.

Mr Bradley: The member says I sound jealous. That is revealing in itself. Sometimes the interjections I hear are most beneficial.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): Are you saying you don't like the private sector? Is that what you're saying, that you don't like the private sector? Is that what Jim Bradley says?

Mr Bradley: I hear Bill, the government man. My friend Bill, who used to be the independent-minded, cussin' fella from Grey county, is now a government man. He's a government man now. He stood up in the House today and voted for a closure motion, and Bill never used to do that, never did that before.

When he mentions the private sector, my good friend from Grey county would know about privatization. How many severances were granted by my friend Bill when he was in Grey county?

Mr Murdoch: Quite a few.

Mr Bradley: He says thousands of severances were granted up in Grey county when he was there. But he gets me off-topic.

Interjections.

Mr Bradley: For a change. You know how I assiduously stay on the provisions of every piece of legislation. You know I do that. However, when I am provoked, I sometimes have to respond.

If the legislation federally is not good enough to catch Conservative Senator Michel Cogger, for instance, or — there was a Conservative member of Parliament who was just sentenced today to a jail sentence for influence-peddling. If it doesn't do that, improve on the provincial legislation so it's even better than the federal legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: With the new rules of the Legislature, I have a mere 20 minutes to talk about what is fairly significant legislation when it comes to what this government plans on doing with the Members' Integrity Act, and I would want at least a half-hour to talk about that, but also what it means to the conflict-of-interest legislation and the Lobbyists Registration Act.

I want to say up front that our caucus generally is in support of this legislation, but I think a number of questions have to be raised. The first question we have to ask ourselves is, where has the Tory government been for the last three years? This government, in opposition, talked about the importance of having lobbyists registration legislation to try to contain the lobbyists of this province in some sort of fashion that would be squeaky clean, as we might say. The government touted this in opposition. I remember. The then third party and Mike Harris were saying how important this was. Three years have gone by

and this government all of a sudden has come with this legislation.

I raise this point for this reason, and fairly simply this: This government has seen fit to ram all kinds of legislation through this House; they've changed the rules of the House to allow a bill to go from first to third reading in merely about a week, so certainly to God the members on the government side could have had this legislation in place two years ago or a year ago. You have to ask yourself —

Mr Lessard: Bill 31, 21 days.

Mr Bisson: Exactly: 21 days on the Hydro bill and I'm going to come to that in a —

Mr Lessard: Bill 31, the Wal-Mart bill.

Mr Bisson: Yes, the Wal-Mart bill. I want to come back to that in a second. But the point I make is that this government has waited three years for a reason, and I think it's a fairly simple reason: This government has embarked on the largest privatization exercise this province has ever seen. They're in the process of privatizing everything that moves in government. They have a belief that the private sector is smarter than everybody else and that the public sector and government in general can't do anything right. So we're going to be saved from ourselves, the people of Ontario, because that's who the public sector is, and we're going to give everything to the private sector.

This government has set up a privatization agenda. They have started the privatization of our health care system. One of the first things this government did when it came to power under Bill 26 was to change the rules in this province that allow, for the first time, American corporations to move into Ontario to offer specific health care services in Ontario. There are big dollars in that. The province spends about \$20 billion per year on health care. Imagine the private sector wiggling into its way into those coffers. They'd be able to make themselves a pretty significant return on that investment if we get into the privatized health care system that Harris is trying to set up.

Look at what the government has done when it comes to education. We know that the government, through a lot of bills they've passed in this Legislature in the past three years, are setting up the privatization model to allow — what do we call them?

Mr Lessard: Charter schools.

Mr Bisson: Charter schools in Ontario. This government is going to allow, for the first time, in a big way, the opportunity for the private sector to move in and say, "We're going to offer education to your kids who are below grade 12 in a charter school." Why? Because this government is going to underfund education —

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: There we go again. The government is espousing exactly what its policy is. I hear the member across the way heckling what I'm saying. We've hit something here.

The government is underfunding education. Why? For a very simple reason: They want it to break down. They

want to do what Mr Snobelen said he would do when he was appointed a cabinet minister in 1995: They've created a crisis in the Ministry of Education and Training; they've underfunded the system and they've put it into crisis. When the system of education at the pre-college or university level goes into crisis — and I'll deal with that in a second; it's a separate issue — parents will be saying: "All I want is the best education possible for my kids. If the public sector doesn't offer a good education for my kids, I'm a parent and I want to do the right thing. I'll pay to send my child to the charter school." There's another opportunity for the private sector to get involved in government business in Ontario, utilizing our tax dollars.

I look at Ontario Hydro. This government is embarking on a whole scheme to privatize, over a period of about — it's not going to happen in a short while, but over a period of about 10 years they're going to privatize much of what we understand as Ontario Hydro today. Again, the government is creating an opportunity. Ontario Hydro, the large corporation in Ontario, is being opened up to the private sector. The Conservative Party, which is ruling the province of Ontario, is going to make it possible for the private sector to get involved in making some dollars out of yet again what is a public corporation, Ontario Hydro. They're going to allow them to get into the generating business. They're going to allow them to get into different parts of the business of Ontario Hydro, yet another opportunity for their friends and business to make a few dollars.

Mr Lessard: Big dollars.

Mr Bisson: Big dollars, huge dollars. We're not talking about 10,000 bucks. We're not talking \$1 million. We're talking literally billions of dollars. That's what you're going to give them an opportunity for.

So why is it that the government didn't introduce this legislation two years ago? It's very simple. They had to put the mechanisms in place to allow the privatization agenda to move forward way before lobbyists registration was put in place because they wanted to make sure they lined up their friends at the — I can't say the word; it's unparliamentary. I was going to say "trough" and I withdrew that before I say it. They were going to —

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: No, I withdraw it because I don't want to be unparliamentary here in the House tonight. I want to be as polite as I can with the government members because I owe them that respect. The government members — not the government members per se; the cabinet of Ontario, Mike Harris and his friends in the circle — wanted to make sure they lined up their friends so that they can go in there and line up their opportunities when it comes to the privatization initiative in this province.

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This government is now coming forward with what is not, frankly, a bad piece of legislation. Generally, there are some good parts in this legislation that I can support, and on the principle of the balance of the thing I will support it in the end, but I want to raise the point: Where have they been for the last three years? They've been

setting up the privatization agenda to make sure they set up the business opportunity for their friends in the private sector to profit from what are tax dollars, and now they come in three years later and introduce the legislation. By the time this thing is proclaimed, which if we're lucky will probably, at the very earliest, be January 1 next year, the government's going to be in a position of being pretty close to an election, so nothing happens.

I wonder where the government's been for the past three years. I listen and the government touts and says: "We're the first government in Ontario, the only provincial government, to ever have done this, blah, blah, blah." It's more of the same rhetoric. Listen, since 1792 we've been talking about this issue and we haven't done a lot about it in Ontario.

Mr Hastings: Why didn't you pass that bill when you were in government?

Mr Bisson: For a simple reason. Because up to this point there has never been a need to protect ourselves from lobbyists. There hasn't been billions of dollars to be made out of the public purse, but the government of Ontario is making it possible for people in the private sector to come in and make substantial amounts of money through the privatization initiative. So yes, this legislation is now apparently becoming needed, because the government is creating the need, and that's the point I want to make in the debate.

I support the legislation inasmuch as it's going to make sure that we deal with those business people who are trying to set themselves up to lobby for profit. I support the initiative because, I tell you, it's going to be needed big time, as my friend Mr Pouliot from Nipigon says, when it comes to what this government is doing.

Just to finish on that particular point, because there are a few more points I want to make, basically the Harris Conservatives are setting up the privatization agenda. It's an American agenda they're bringing into Ontario, and yes, we'll probably need this legislation to protect ourselves.

Second point: These guys are a bunch of Americans in Canadian clothing. That's what they are. I listen to Mike Harris and his Republican gang that he has on the other side of the House and I watch —

Mr Baird: We're all monarchists.

Mr Bisson: You're far from being monarchists, let me tell you. I listen to that Republican gang of Newt Gingrich across the way and I watch the stuff they do in this House. They so much admire what happens within the right wing of the United States and in the politics of the United States that they import a lot of their ideas on this side of the border. I don't need to go through it, but much of what we see in the Conservative agenda of the province of Ontario is stuff we've been seeing happen in the States for the last 10 or 15 years. It's this whole shift to the right that we've seen in the United States. A move towards privatization, a move towards deregulation, a move towards the private sector: All of that stuff we've seen in the States. They figure, "Jeez, the Americans have got themselves some lobbyists registration legislation, so we need some too."

I've been around this House longer than most members on the government side, which is not saying a lot; I've only been here eight years. But the point I make is this: In eight years — five years in government, three years in opposition — I have never once been approached by anybody, private sector or public sector, to come and try to advance a position for profit on their part. I don't think any member in this assembly has been up to this point. I would hope not because I haven't seen it.

The point I make is that this is like Americanism creeping into what we see in the mindset of the government. This is not the United States of America. This is Toronto, Canada. In Canada we have a system of parliamentary democracy that I would say is far different and I would say far superior to what we see in the United States of America. This whole notion of what happens with lobbyists is a totally different experience in Canada than it is in the States. I look at my friend from Nepean. He has travelled to the United States, the same as I have. He has met with American congressmen and senators, same as I have.

Mr Baird: No, I haven't.

Mr Bisson: I'm sure you have, being in government.

They have a system down there — let me tell you what they do. In the United States of America, at the state legislature level, most of those politicians work on a part-time basis. They get very little salary from the state legislatures or the state senates. Do you know why?

Mr Lessard: Who do they get paid by?

Mr Bisson: Exactly. The member for Windsor-Riverside says, "Who do they get paid by?" They get paid by the big companies. They get paid by the pharmaceuticals. They get paid by the large companies in the United States to advance their cause within the legislatures in the United States of America when it comes to the state legislatures.

Mr Hastings: It sounds like Great Britain.

Mr Bisson: Again, Great Britain is not Canada. It's a different experience. I say to the members across the way, in Canada we have a much different approach. There have been very few examples in this country, provincially or federally, where governments have been on the take when it comes to advancing an interest of the private sector. There have been a couple of examples that I don't want to go into because they're black marks on the politics of Canada, but they've been few and far between, and there's good reason for that. Our system doesn't operate the same way as the American. We have a system that's much more transparent and much more open. We have a different political culture here in Canada, all across Canada in the various provinces, in how we deal with this whole issue of lobbying.

I hear the members across the way. I was listening to the speeches last night from the government side talk about, "You've got all kinds of people who come here and lobby and try to affect public policy." That's what we do for a living. It's called democracy. The people from the co-op housing movement, the people from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the chamber of com-

merce, and yes, the unions, approach governments of all stripes, at all times, to advance their view as to where they would like to see public policy. How is that a bad thing? I say it's not a bad thing.

Mr Murdoch: What's your point?

Mr Bisson: The member doesn't get it. He says, "What's your point?" My point is very simple. You have this legislation split into a couple of sections. You are, on the one hand, saying we have to register lobbyists who are trying to lobby for money, and I agree with that point. I think that's the good part of the legislation. But on the other hand, we're saying we want to register lobbyists within the Canadian independent business federation who are here to lobby us on their view. It's a different view from mine, but it is their view nonetheless. We have the chambers of commerce, the unions, the co-op housing movement, various movements that are out there trying to advance their cause, and we're saying we have to register these people as lobbyists.

Excuse me, I have a bit of a problem with that because I look at those people and they're not in it for the money. Ms Swift and the independent business federation is in that for money? Did anybody ever see her salary lately? The people at the chamber of commerce, the people at the OFL, the Steelworkers, the co-op housing movement or whatever organization is out there? They're paid by their associations that get it from the dues from their members, of all types, businesses and whatever, to come here and to say, "Listen, Mr Baird, we have a problem," or, "We support the legislation you're putting forward," or, "We would like your government to do X, Y or Z."

The point I make is that we should have separated that out of the legislation. I don't believe those people should be registered lobbyists. I don't see the independent business federation, the chamber of commerce, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the co-op housing movement as needing to be registered under this legislation. I think those kinds of people have very specific mandates. They're there to advocate policy in regard to their members when it comes to the policy of Ontario. They will bring forward their positions, just as every other group does out there, to whatever the government is, and they will try to affect it and governments will all deal with it the same. They'll listen to what has been said, they will try to take into consideration what has been said to them and they will give effect to public policy according to what they've heard overall.

I say to the members, I have no problem with registering private individuals who are trying to advance taxpayers' dollars to advance their particular economic projects, but I have a problem —

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: There's a huge difference and the government members don't understand. How is the co-op movement, how is the union movement, how is the chamber of commerce in conflict in trying to lobby for what is public policy?

I'll give you a good example. The chamber of commerce in the city of Timmins has positions they're

trying to advocate on behalf of the small business community in Timmins. They come to me as the member in government in opposition and they say, "Gilles, we believe the government should do X, Y and Z to assist the business community." How is that a problem when it comes to lobbying? I don't understand why we have to register the chamber of commerce as lobbyists. They're advocating for the business community in Ontario, and you say you want to register them? What is this? Are you guys only for the big business sector and you're opposed to the small business sector? I wonder.

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Interjection: No, you're opposed to small business.

Mr Bisson: I come from the small business sector. I have no problem when it comes to trying to lobby for small business. But on this particular point I only say, yes, register those people who are lobbying to get dollars from the government for the personal advancement of their company. I understand that. I understand the logic. But to register the chamber of commerce for trying to advance the cause of the small business community, I don't know, I have a deep problem with that one.

I also want to raise another issue in the three minutes I have left, and that is subsection 18(d) within the legislation having to do with this. It says, "Requiring a fee to be paid on the filing of a return or a return of a class..." blah, blah, blah. Tax grab. I remember Mike Harris in opposition. What did he say? "A user fee is a tax is a tax is a tax." That's what Mike Harris was saying. He advocated in opposition, on this side of the House as third party, that anybody who imposes a user fee is imposing a tax on the people of Ontario.

You know what? I see Mike Harris every day just grabbing those tax dollars, left hand, right hand, just going after it. Why? Because he has decided he has got to give a stupid tax cut — and by the way, people making over \$80,000 a year benefit the most out of this. Now he's saying: "Oh, I lost a whole bunch of revenue. How am I going to make up the revenue?" So he goes in and charges a bunch of user fees, other taxes.

I see, for example, when a child wants to go out and play hockey nowadays in our communities, the service clubs that sponsor the hockey teams or the baseball teams or whatever it might be have to pay larger user fees to their municipalities to rent the rinks or rent the baseball diamonds. Why? Because the government went and cut the funding to the municipalities, so there goes another user fee. They passed legislation in this place to allow municipalities to have all kinds of user fees. There was a whole host of them in one piece of legislation.

We see the government charging user fees now, from \$60 per year to \$275 per year, when it comes to posting advertising signs on the side of the highway. I had a letter that came in the other day from Gerry Cochon, from Camper City out of Timmins. He said: "Listen, I need to advertise my business. Part of what I have to do is put these signs on the side of the highway to indicate to people that I'm in the business that I have of selling trailers etc. I used to pay \$60 per year in order to be able to advertise

with those signs." The government raised it from \$60 all the way to \$275 when it comes to that particular user fee. I remember, when we were in government, Gerry talking to me and saying, "Gilles, you moved it from \$40 to \$60," and he was pretty mad. I remember that, \$40 to \$60. But this government has gone from \$60 per year to \$275 when it comes to that particular fee. I'm telling you, that's a tax on small business, because by and large it's small business that utilizes those.

I look at the tax on seniors when it comes to the prescription drug program. I've got seniors in my community who are so mad at you that if Mike Harris walks in my riding he's going to have to duck, because seniors are saying: "Gilles, I'm having to pay user fees on medication that I've never had to pay before. I've worked all my life, and Mike Harris is adding this extra tax on me." That's basically what he's doing.

Mr Len Wood: Even the kids booed him at the SkyDome.

Mr Bisson: I'd love to go that way, but anyway, the point is that this government, by way of this legislation, is creating yet another tax to be able to charge people. I say to the government, I can understand and support the general direction of the government when it comes to the legislation, but when it comes to certain points of the legislation —

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for setting up this finale. I would only say, general support, yes. I have a problem with your registering lobbyists such as the chamber of commerce. I don't think that's right; I think it's wrong. I certainly oppose yet another user fee or hidden tax by way of this legislation. I look forward to the comments of the members.

Mr Murdoch: We've had a very interesting speech from across the side there. The member asked, "Where has the government been for the last three years?" He asked that question. He should know where we've been. We've been here cleaning up the mess that was created for 10 lost years in this House. We had a coalition of Liberals and NDP, then we got the Liberals, then five years of socialistic government that brought this province almost to its knees. Where have we been for three years? Trying to clean this mess up. They created a mess in education, in the health care system, the roads; anything you want to talk about, this government over here, they created it. That's where we've been for the last three years. You wanted to know. Well, we can tell you where we've been for the last three years.

Then you go on; you and the Liberals are against private enterprise. No wonder you brought this government down; no wonder you brought Ontario to its knees. You're against private enterprise, the people who create jobs in this province. The people who create the jobs are private enterprise, and you're against them, and the Liberals over here. We heard the Liberal member speak against private enterprise. No wonder we're in trouble. Where have we been for three years? Cleaning up your

mess, that's where we've been. Cleaning up the mess that you guys created, you and the Liberals, the two of you. You got into bed 10 years ago, and you were bedwetters, and you've been that way ever since. You've created so much mess around here that that's what we have to clean up. That's what we've been doing the last three years, cleaning up the mess that the bedwetters on the other side, the accord, made 10 years ago. For 10 years they messed this province up. Now we're cleaning it up.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I move that the member for Grey-Owen Sound get another two minutes and another response.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. He will get his turn as it comes. The member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: I am sure the people who are watching this must be saying, "What are these people doing about getting us ready for the 21st century?" Talking about what happened in the early 1990s or late 1980s certainly isn't part of that. The government almost seems to be talking with glee about what happened many years ago. Let me tell you something: The people of Ontario aren't interested in that.

I would like to follow up on one thing the member for Cochrane South was talking about. He talked about these kinds of organizations like the chambers of commerce and the boards of trade etc that now have to register as lobbyists. Of course, it's absurd. Some of these organizations that are set up as lobby organizations, that we all know as lobby organizations, shouldn't be registered.

But it goes even further than that. Let me just refer you to clause 1(1)(e), which says that not only should those kinds of organizations be registered as lobbyists but also "a government, other than the government of Ontario." Here we have now a ridiculous situation where, if your local government is not happy with something that's happening at Queen's Park and wants to make a legitimate beef to Queen's Park about something or other, they now have to register.

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: Look at the act. They now have to register.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Gerretsen: I'm sure that what the people of Ontario want is to register those people we don't know who are lurking around Queen's Park here but not legitimate other levels of government that come here to air their grievances.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I want to just remind the members that it's not proper behaviour to heckle. Comments and questions?

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Mr Lessard: I want to thank you very much, Speaker, for reminding the members of the House that heckling is never in order. I hope that whatever I have to say is not going to encourage any heckling by the members on the other side, especially the member for Nepean, who always seems to have an interest in having the last word.

I want to thank the member for Cochrane South for his insightful remarks about this bill this evening — not only insightful, but obviously they have generated the interest of the member for Grey-Owen Sound, whose speech I was captivated by, but I was wondering when he was going to get to the point. Maybe he'll have an opportunity later this evening to tell us how he feels about this legislation.

The member for Cochrane South talks about some of the loopholes in this bill, some of the user fees that are going to be imposed as a result of it. My concern is that some of these user fees, the fees for registration, are going to be a restriction on those who really have an interest in lobbying government on behalf of the public interest. We want to make sure this isn't a restriction on those people, that everybody has an open and transparent opportunity to lobby government, because that's the reason we're here: We're here to make decisions in the public interest, and we want to make sure the public interest is paramount and it's not only those who are the most well-off, who are the most wealthy, who are the most well-organized who are going to have the opportunity to have the most influence on government. We think that is wrong. The government is moving in the wrong direction — not too far, too fast, but in the wrong direction.

M. Hastings : J'ai écouté soigneusement la présentation, les mots et les idées, du député de Cochrane-Sud. Quelle absurdité. Quelle absence de logique concernant les idées sur le projet de loi 69.

I've never listened to such illogical comments from the NDP regarding this bill. First off, they're concerned about the costs of running the Internet and the fees attached to it, but they conveniently forget the costs the federal government requires for electronic registration of their particular lobbying bill. We never heard anything from the members for St Catharines or Cochrane South regarding that.

Then we have the member for Windsor-Riverside speaking about wanting to have a transparent and open process. He just turned around and said, "It's a bad bill, having lobbyists register," yet we heard the member for Cochrane South talk about never once having had a lobbyist, anybody from the government relations field, contact him regarding any concerns about labour relations. Are we in this House to believe that Mr Sid Ryan, Ontario president of CUPE, or Bob White of the CLC has never contacted the member, never a phone call? How far isolated is the member for Cochrane South? Why is it that we see him appearing so often at government relations fests, where he has a meal like I do? Admit it, monsieur le député. Be truthful for once over there.

M. Bisson : Le membre d'Etobicoke aurait dû continuer en français. Il faisait beaucoup plus de bon sens avant qu'il n'ait viré en anglais. C'est tout ce que j'ai à dire.

Aussi, au même membre, j'ai besoin de dire que je n'ai jamais dit que personne dans le mouvement syndical ou la chambre de commerce ou autre groupe ne m'ait jamais approché afin d'avancer une politique provinciale. Du tout. Tout ce que je dis, c'est qu'on doit avoir de la législation pour se protéger contre ceux qui veulent faire un

profit financier eux-mêmes dans leur poche, par comparaison avec ceux qui essaient d'avancer la politique provinciale. C'est tout ce que je dis.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: No Ed Philip, indeed.

I also want to say to the member for Windsor-Riverside, he's quite right: This is yet again within the legislation another attempt to garner a hidden tax. The government, legislation by legislation, has gone forward and imposed all kinds of user fees within the province of Ontario. Why? Because they're trying to offset their tax cut. Why don't you just be clean and say what it is? It's very simple.

The member from Owen Sound accuses both the Liberal Party and the NDP of bedwetting. I have to say there's no bed that's big enough to let me jump in with them.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: I want to compliment the member for Cochrane South on a good finale. That's undoubtedly his best finale. But when he says there's no bed big enough that he could get in, this is a place they've been before. We remember 1985. They know just how comfortable that bed was and how much debt and regulation and how many jobs were killed during those two years.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise to speak on the Lobbyists Registration Act. This is an important piece of legislation, as it's an important part of maintaining the integrity not just of elected officials but the public's integrity and confidence in their entire governmental process — not just elected officials, but indeed within the public service as well. At the end of the day it's the responsibility of the elected government to maintain honesty and integrity in their dealings with others in a pluralistic society. That's something that's very important.

Lobbyist registration, we must be clear, is not the answer to all the challenges that face elected officials in this area, but it's a very important spoke in the wheel of honesty and integrity in government. We're constantly, as elected officials in this place, trying to raise the bar, to make the standard even higher than it was in previous years. It's important to note that while some 38 states south of the border have some sort of lobbyist statute, Ontario is leading the way in Canada. We're the first province to propose, and hopefully pass shortly, lobbyist registration. That's something important to note, that Ontario is leading the way in setting the bar higher than other provinces.

Lobbyist registration would be part of a number of important statutes that will help inspire confidence in the governmental process. We have the Election Finances Act, which not only sets expense limits but sets the rules on who can give and how much those individuals can give. Most importantly, it makes public donations of more than \$100 so that the public can see who is giving money towards campaigns. I think public disclosure, public access to the facts, is even more important than any integrity law, so the public can know how much an

individual gave an individual candidate or an individual party. Shining the light in will certainly assist the process and force all political actors to act more responsibly. That's extremely important.

We also have, in the province of Ontario, some of the most strict members' integrity requirements, which is extremely important. I want to give some credit to the NDP government. They passed the Members' Integrity Act in 1994, which is some of the most stiff requirements for elected officials. That is something we all take extremely seriously. The NDP government of the day brought that in, and we have the toughest integrity act of any jurisdiction.

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The member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay asks why they did that. I will tell you why: Evelyn Gigantes, Shelley Martel, Anne Swarbrick, Mike Farnan, Peter North, Jenny Carter, Zanana Akande, and I could go on and on and on. Under the NDP government, more cabinet ministers had to resign per capita than just about anywhere in Commonwealth history. In just a few short years they were losing — at one point they were losing a minister about every three months. That's why. They saw that the Premier's informal guidelines just didn't cut it, that they had to go in legislation. I want to give them credit that they put that in law, that it was important.

When the NDP was elected in 1990, they had to clean up the mess of the Patti Starr years. They had to clean up for Patti Starr. The Patti Starr scandal left a very unpleasant odour in this place and in the political discourse of the province. It infected the Liberal government of the day.

If anyone wants to talk about integrity, it's the member for Simcoe West. When he was in opposition he spoke very highly and called for the highest standard of integrity from the NDP government of the day. He talked the talk and he walked the walk. Not one member of this Legislature was ever able to stand in their place and demand his resignation, because he did the honourable thing and held himself up to the highest ethical standard seen in this province in many years. If we can all be held to that high ethical standard, we will be well spoken of. The member for Simcoe West, while he spoke highly when he was in opposition, he walked the walk.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. There are conversations going on. It would be better if you removed yourselves to carry those on rather than have me do it for you.

Mr Baird: The conduct and high standard of the member for Simcoe West is something that was not always the case in previous governments. Day after day, members would come to this place to demand the resignation of an NDP or a Liberal cabinet minister who had clearly broken integrity guidelines and rules, and day after day they would be yanked out one at a time, and that was of course the wrong way to go. So I can understand why the Members' Integrity Act of 1994 was passed: to try to clean up the mess of the NDP years and of the Patti Starr scandal, which really rocked integrity. No one in this government has ever got a free fridge from a fundraiser.

Mr Gerretsen: Not that we know of, anyway.

Mr Baird: I say to the member opposite, I go to many Conservative offices and there are little stickers and little magnets on the fridge saying, "Patti Starr did not buy me this fridge," just so that people know about the high standard of this place. No member of this caucus has ever —

Mr Lessard: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member is raising some interesting points. He is referring the Patti Starr book, Tempting Fate. I think that we should have a quorum to hear him speak about this and I don't believe that we have one.

The Deputy Speaker: Would you check and see if there's a quorum present.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: Donc je dis à mon collègue le député de Prescott et Russell qu'il reste ici pour qu'on puisse avoir le quorum. Je lui rappelle une petite partie de mon discours en français et c'est quelque chose qui était très important. Je voudrais parler du projet de loi que le gouvernement NPD a appuyé et que notre parti aussi a appuyé, sur l'intégrité dans le gouvernement.

Just to read from that act:

"3. Members are expected to perform their duties of office and arrange their private affairs in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity of each member, maintains the assembly's dignity and justifies the respect in which society holds the assembly and its members.

"4. Members are expected to act with integrity and impartiality that will bear the closest scrutiny."

This lobbyist registration seeks to enhance these tough guidelines, with respect to integrity in members, by raising the bar because, for Mike Harris and this government, we want to raise the bar and to require even a higher standard of conduct from public officials. That is something we all take extremely seriously. This integrity act was passed in 1994 and has gone into effect and is very important.

There has been a terrific amount of discussion on this issue with respect to who should have to qualify to register. Some of our friends in the NDP don't believe that someone who is paid and works as an in-house lobbyist should have to register. Let me give you an example of why this is important. In 1995, after the Ontario Legislature was dissolved, the NDP government of the day, after the writs were issued and after this House was dissolved, gave a \$4-million or \$5-million grant to a labour union, with no public participation in that process.

I would like to know which union leader lobbied; I would like to know which union leader lobbied whom in the New Democratic Party government. Was that union leader's union affiliated with the NDP? How much money from that union went to the New Democratic Party of the day? But to give that size of a grant after the Legislature has been dissolved, let alone try to attempt to flow the money after they've lost the election, I find it absolutely reprehensible. So when the NDP members opposite ask us

why an in-house lobby should have to register, that's the example I'll use: because I want to know which union leader lobbied for that grant and I want to know whom they lobbied. If they did, we would have a trail to get to the bottom of that outrageous activity.

Would the members opposite say that the Canadian Tobacco Manufacturers' Council, which might have in-house lobbyists, shouldn't have to register and that we should let that go unregulated? Apparently so. I think they should have to register because I'd like to know who is lobbying whom on either side, the smokers' rights or the tobacco manufacturers'. The public has a right to know, and to leave that would be too big a loophole. That's why it's covered in this legislation and is something that I believe is exceptionally important.

There has been a significant amount of debate going on in this House by other members: "Why did it take so long? Why wasn't this done years ago?" I ask, in five years of Liberal government, was it done?

Mr Barrett: It wasn't.

Mr Baird: It wasn't done, the member for Norfolk said. It wasn't a priority. Patti Starr didn't want the Lobbyists Registration Act. Patti Starr said, "No, this would make it too public." Ask Alvin Curling why Patti Starr didn't want lobbyist registration. The Liberals had five years to do lobbyist registration but they chose not to.

Then the New Democratic Party had five years to bring in a Lobbyists Registration Act. I think they must have been so busy trying to put small businesses out of business and so busy trying to relocate most industries to Buffalo, they didn't have time to do it. I looked at their legislative calendar. They only sat 20 days in the last year. With the 345 additional days in the year, they could have called the Legislature back to deal with lobbyist registration, but they chose not to because they didn't want to be accountable to the opposition of the day. They didn't want to be accountable in this place.

That's the one thing you'll say about Mike Harris and the provincial Conservative government today: that they are very accountable. The Legislature is in session and they answer questions in the Legislature, something we didn't see under the previous government. The House didn't even sit, and that was wrong.

Why didn't the NDP government do it? People say, "Why has it taken so long for Mike Harris to do it?" He's doing it in his first term, which is very important to note and it's something that bears notice. Why didn't he do it right away? Because he had to clean up after five years of socialist mismanagement of this province: five years of excessive regulation, of excessive taxation and excessive debt that was rung up by the socialist government for five years. When we finished that, we had to clean up the NDP mess too, and that is something that is important. We had to make priorities to clean up the five years of NDP mismanagement after the five years of socialist mismanagement from our colleagues in the Liberal Party. I should give the NDP credit for at least two of those years. They were co-managers at that time.

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When we were sitting down to make priorities and we talked to some of the whiz kids like Barbara Colantonio across the way, we had to decide, would we bring in mandatory work for welfare first. We thought mandatory workfare is very important, so mandatory work for welfare had priority, because the welfare system had got out of control under Treasurer Robert Nixon and the NDP. We're guilty. Mandatory work for welfare was a real priority for this government. That came first.

Getting rid of quotas and restoring merit-based hiring practices in Ontario: That too was more important.

Scrapping and repealing Bill 40, the job-killing labour legislation, was a real priority and was very important.

I don't play golf. There's a golf tag from the credit union given for the NDP members who play golf. I want to know who from the credit union is lobbying the government. I want to know, not like my colleagues opposite, who is giving these trinkets. More importantly, our constituents want to know. I'll save these golf tees for my socialist friends in the Liberal Party who love to golf.

What else did we have to do after repealing the job-killing labour legislation, Bill 40? We had to promote workplace democracy to allow every worker in the province a vote on whether they chose or did not choose to join a union. That was important for the worker, a pro-worker bill.

We had to cut taxes for working families because the tax burden was simply killing jobs. So cutting taxes to create jobs was very important.

I'm a little bit puzzled to hear my NDP friend suggest that this government just isn't going fast enough, because we want to take the time to get it right. That's something that's very important for our government: to go slowly. I take with a grain of salt their criticism that it took so long. The fact is we're the government to do it in our first term, and that is more than either opposition party can say. That is something that is exceptionally important.

To inspire integrity, to open up the process, if you could just let a little light in, that's half the answer to these problems. I think the public has a right to know who's lobbying the member for Scarborough North. They want to know what type of decisions they're going to get out of the member for Scarborough North.

Mr Barrett: What's going on in those backrooms.

Mr Baird: What's going on in those Liberal backrooms, the member for Norfolk says. We want to know. The public, our constituents, have a right to know. It's not just for what they'll find out; I think it will help govern conduct in the future, which is even more important. That is exceptionally important to know.

This legislation that we've introduced will require lobbyists to register their identity. It will require them to identify the names of their clients and declare the lobbying activity on a government registry. Different from some government registries, this is not going to be in an office tower in Toronto that someone from Nepean is going to have to visit to get that information. It will be available on the Web at any library and at any school or home. The

public will be able to look into what lobbying is done on their government, because we mustn't forget that this is not a Conservative government, an NDP government or a Liberal government, this is the people's government and they have a right to see what's going on and to shine lights in.

Mr Barrett: Democracy at its finest.

Mr Baird: The member for Norfolk says, "Democracy at its finest." Absolutement. Exactly.

People who try to lobby office holders to influence government decisions about legislative proposals, bills, regulations, changes to policies and programs, the awarding of contracts, contributions and other financial benefits, and indeed about privatization activities, will be required — we think that will add to the public process and instill not just integrity, but public confidence in the system, which is extremely important, not just among elected officials but among the public service as well, which is an important partner in the governing process. That is something that is extremely important.

I say to the member for Cochrane South that it is extremely important that in-house lobbyists register. The public has a right to know who is lobbying this place, regardless who pays for their freight.

Mr Hastings: Disclosure.

Mr Baird: Disclosure, as the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale says, will be an important part of the democratic process. This bill raises the standard of public integrity. This bill raises the standard of instilling confidence in government because that is extremely important. We must do that every day. That's something the Mike Harris government has sought to do, first and foremost by living up to the promises we made. For too long politicians said one thing at election time — "We'll scrap and axe the GST" — and did quite a different thing after election day.

Mr Hastings: Who said that?

Mr Baird: "Who said that?" the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale said.

Mr Hastings: Monsieur le Premier Ministre?

Mr Baird: Monsieur le Premier Ministre Chrétien a dit ça. He said, "We will scrap and axe it."

To instill some integrity in the process, to live up to our campaign promises, which this government is doing, is important, and as well to lead by example.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Sergio: I would like to respond to the comments from the member for Nepean. He has given an account of the bill presented by the government, and that's fine. I wish they would listen to the opposition side when we are about to comment on their bills as well.

This is one of those that is flawed, but if I have to give them some credit, it is for introducing the legislation, although three-and-a-half years late. Yes, it is here and we are saying to you that it is good, fine, that you have introduced it, but you didn't go far enough. If you really are concerned about maintaining integrity, then do the right thing and change those three particular things in the act here.

First, it does not give any direction other than what the government imposed on the Integrity Commissioner. Can you believe, Mr Speaker, that we don't have one person out there who can act on their own, but only under the rules and direction of the cabinet? Well, gee, thanks a lot. We have an Integrity Commissioner who will oversee complaints, but only under the direction imposed by the government. Isn't that nice? I think the member should take note of that.

Second, if you really want to preserve the true spirit and gain the confidence of the public out there, then for goodness' sake close the loopholes. Don't give yourself: "Just in case we are going to be here three years from now to make decisions, we want to reserve the right to have the cabinet, the Premier, the minister, the deputy minister and anybody else down the road make exemptions."

Pardon me, but as a taxpayer I resent that the government cannot present legislation fully complete, with no loopholes.

Mr Bisson: I listened intently to the member for Nepean and at the end of the speech he wrapped up by saying that people are tired of seeing governments that don't hold to their commitments. I propose that the people of Ontario are going to be mad in the next election, are going to be pretty tired of this government that has gone against most of the major commitments it made in the election of 1995.

The Tories seem to have a short memory. I remember, because I, as other members in this assembly, was present in the last provincial election when the Mike Harris Conservatives promised, what? Not one cent was going to be taken from education. I guess they kept their promise. They didn't take out a penny; they took \$1 billion out of the system of education. They said they weren't going to close any hospitals in the province of Ontario. They were going to make sure everybody had a hospital in Ontario. They didn't close one — I guess they kept their promise — they closed 27 hospitals across Ontario.

Mr Gerretsen: Thirty-four.

Mr Bisson: Thirty-four. Actually, it's gone up from 27 to 34 in the last couple of months.

Mr Hastings: You closed 10,000 hospital beds.

Mr Bisson: He says we closed 10,000 hospital beds. Thirty-four hospitals: That's what you closed. And you talk about holding your commitment, the government that said in the last provincial election they weren't going to close any hospitals?

I remember that candidates like Mr Saunderson and Mr Leach, the Minister of Housing, in the last provincial election had posters all over saying, "We're not going to scrap rent control." What did the Minister of Housing do? He scrapped rent control. Talk about keeping his commitment. I remember that provincial election. Mr Saunderson, Mr Leach, Mr Shea and a whole bunch of other Toronto members campaigned on preserving rent control. And environmental legislation, let's not go there; it's a disaster. We'll deal with that one in the next election.

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Hon Mr Wilson: The member from Cochrane does a great disservice to the member for Nepean, who gave a very thoughtful discussion about the Lobbyists Registration Act. There are two things; one is that you would think the NDP, of all parties, would support the fact that we're asking people to pay a fee to register, just to cover the cost of the public service of registering, the government cost, people who are professional lobbyists. Please read the bill. These people make a lot of money. If it's a charitable organization, they don't have to pay these fees. If they get paid big money to lobby you and I, then they can afford this very small fee. That's one thing.

The second thing is with respect to hospitals.

Mr Lessard: Why are we discussing that?

Hon Mr Wilson: Because the member from Cochrane mentioned that.

When the NDP was in office, you supported, along with the Liberals, half-empty hospital buildings in this province to the point where you closed 13,000 hospital beds during your time in office. You left my local hospitals half empty. You left 126 hospitals in this province half empty. We were paying the maintenance, the overhead, and do you know what? The number one complaint in our hospitals was that there were no nurses and doctors to look after the patients. By God, we're putting the nurses and doctors back in, we're closing half-empty buildings, we're amalgamating them and we're putting the patient first. That's what our health care policy is in this province.

Mr Gerretsen: Let me just say that is a tough act to follow. For the first time in my three years here, I was actually scared to be on this side of the House, looking at the minister go absolutely ballistic when he got all his facts wrong. Anyway, we'll deal with that later on.

The member for Nepean said that the reason this bill wasn't brought in earlier was that they wanted to get it right. I wish this government had shown the same concern for the property taxpayers out there. It has taken you, so far, six bills, and you still haven't got the property taxation situation right in this province. There are thousands of small business individuals out there whose businesses you are absolutely ruining because of the tremendous increase of taxation that your policy has levied on them. We all know of individual business people whose property taxes have gone up 200%, 300% or 400%. What are we trying to do about it? Absolutely nothing.

We were supposed to come back here on September 28 in order to deal with the property tax bill immediately, so that people could appeal their assessments. What has happened? Two and a half weeks later, the bill still hasn't cleared the House. We have asked the Minister of Finance to bring the bill forward. We want to discuss and debate the bill, and so far that hasn't happened. Why didn't you get that right? Why are you trying to ruin the small businesses in this province? I know that each one of you knows what I'm talking about, because it's happening in all of our ridings. It is totally and absolutely unconscion-

able for this government to basically try to ruin small business in this province.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nepean has two minutes to respond.

Mr Baird: Seeing the member for Simcoe West go after the members opposite makes me want to have been here when we were in opposition. He was obviously trying to outdo the member for Grey-Owen Sound in his performance.

I want to thank the members for Yorkview, Cochrane South, Simcoe West and Kingston and The Islands for their comments.

To the member for Yorkview, I certainly have confidence in the Integrity Commissioner's ability to undertake this act. I think the new Integrity Commissioner, like the old one, is someone with extraordinary abilities who will be able to more than meet the challenge set out in the legislation.

To the member for Cochrane South, this government can go on record as being the government that has kept more promises than any government in Canadian history, and the member for Cochrane South will agree with me that we probably kept more commitments in the Liberal campaign platform than the Liberals would have kept had they formed the government.

Mr Bisson: You're right, that's true.

Mr Baird: He says we're right and it's true. I know even the member for Cochrane South would agree with me. The Liberal platform said: balance the budget, cut taxes, cut spending by billions, cut red tape by 50%, reform the WCB, work for welfare, cut corporate taxes. They promoted all that, and then they voted against it. But our government made a lot of similar commitments and met those promises.

I was a young person in university when the NDP were elected, and I remember the promise to abolish tuition.

Interjection.

Mr Baird: In Kingston, of all places.

Mr Gerretsen: They should have kicked you out.

Mr Baird: I remember the commitment to abolish tuition. I looked on my bill in 1991 and 1992, and they didn't abolish tuition, and they didn't bring in public auto insurance, and the government brought in the social contract, stripping the rights of workers across the province.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerretsen: It's hard to know where to start, with everything that has been said in just the last 10 or 15 minutes, but there are just a couple of points I want to pick up on, and they deal with the fact that the member for Nepean stood up and basically took credit for the Election Finances Act.

If he really thinks that democracy is served well in this province by increasing the spending limits in each and every riding from roughly \$45,000 per riding to well over \$70,000 per riding, which means that each one of us will have to raise more money, which I don't think is all that good for the system, and if he really thinks that it is good for democracy in this province for the central party organ-

izations to be able to spend about twice as much as what they currently can — I believe the old limit was something like \$2 million, and now it's going to be \$4 million — and if he thinks it's good that the individual contribution for political donations can be increased from \$750 to \$4,000 per individual or per organization, he has it dead wrong.

What the people of Ontario want is not an Americanization of our democratic institutions and our democratic system. We all know of the problems they run into in the States, where congressmen, both at the federal and at the state level, are continually fundraising. I don't think we need that kind of a system here, and I don't think our system is well served by it.

There's the other aspect as well, of course, that in addition to all that, we all know that the government just within the last two or three months has spent something like \$6.4 million on purely partisan advertising. I've had calls in my office and many of my colleagues have had calls in their office from people who want to know whether the propaganda they're getting in the mail, whether it's from the education ministry or from the health ministry, is actually paid for by the Conservative Party or whether it's paid for by the government. We all know that most of it has been paid for by the government. Some \$6.4 million is what we have just calculated in a few of the brochures that have gone out over the last two or three months.

I ask each and every one of you, and each and every Ontarian, wouldn't it have been better to spend that \$6.4 million on, for example, making sure that the emergency wards are open in Metro Toronto here? Isn't what we read in the paper this morning a horrible situation, that over the holiday weekend 17 out of the 19 hospitals in Metro Toronto had their emergency wards and rooms closed? How would each one of us like to be placed in a position where we needed those services and we went to a hospital and we could not be helped in emergency basically because of underfunding, because they didn't have the funding to keep those emergency rooms and wards open?

I say that the people of Ontario would much rather have seen that \$6.4 million spent for those purposes, to make sure the health care that all of us need out there at some time or another is available to them, rather than the cheap kind of propaganda advertising that you have shoved through the doors in the advertising campaign just recently. I don't want to dwell on that particular aspect of it.

2120

There are so many issues one can talk about, but I would like to deal with the bill itself. I would like somebody from the government to deal with an issue that has been talked about now by a number of different members: why you found it necessary, in section 18 of the bill — "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations, (a) exempting any person who is appointed to any office or body by or with the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council..." — to exempt people and organizations from this legislation. Why did you find it necessary — it's not in the federal legislation — to

actually exempt people and organizations from this legislation where the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which in normal parlance means the cabinet, feels that it's not required?

What this smacks of is, yes, this is a good piece of legislation, generally speaking, but any time it suits you and you want to exempt a certain situation, you can just do that through cabinet. Why do you find that it's necessary? Would somebody in an intelligent way like to answer that question? Without any of the hysterics, without any of the name-calling, just explain that to me. It's not in the federal legislation. Why did you find it was necessary to allow cabinet to exempt, to give free and overall exemptions to this? That's the first point I want to raise.

The second point is, why did you not include in the legislation a code of conduct as is contained in the federal bill? I took it upon myself to get a copy of the federal code of conduct and I can tell you it is not a complicated document. It is a document that is about five pages long, and on most pages it only contains about two or three paragraphs. For the life of me I cannot understand, if you really want this to be meaningful legislation, why you wouldn't include a code of conduct.

Let me just read you some of the sections. I would invite somebody from the government side to get up and tell me why you didn't include this in there. It says:

"The Lobbyists' Code of Conduct is founded on four concepts...

"Free and open access to government is an important matter of public interest;

"Lobbying public office holders is a legitimate activity;

"It is desirable that public office holders and the public be able to know who is attempting to influence government; and

"A system for the registration of paid lobbyists should not impede free and open access to government."

That is their preamble.

What are the principles, then, of this code of conduct that are contained in the federal act?

"Integrity and honesty.

"Lobbyists should conduct with integrity and honesty all relations with public office holders, clients, employers, the public and other lobbyists."

Why wouldn't you include that statement? That's what the act deals with. Why wouldn't you include the code of conduct?

"Openness

"Lobbyists should, at all times, be open and frank about their lobbying activities, while respecting confidentiality.

"Professionalism

"Lobbyists should observe the highest professional and ethical standards.

"Transparency

"Lobbyists shall, when making a representation to a public office holder, disclose the identity of the person or organization on whose behalf the representation is made, as well as the reasons for the approach."

That's part of the federal code of conduct. Why wouldn't you include it in your act? It seems to me a

reasonable request. If a lobbyist comes to a government department, and if you want to be totally open and transparent about it, that government official or department has the right to know whom exactly you're lobbying for, for what organization.

"Accurate information

"Lobbyists shall provide information that is accurate and factual to public office holders."

Surely you don't disagree with that. You don't think that lobbyists should provide inaccurate information.

"Disclosure of obligations

"Lobbyists shall indicate to their client, employer or organization their obligations under the...act."

Surely that's a reasonable suggestion if you want to make this a meaningful act.

"Confidential information

"Lobbyists shall not divulge confidential information unless they have obtained the informed consent of their client...."

That makes sense. You wouldn't want somebody to reveal the information of a client they represent without the client knowing about it.

"Insider information

"Lobbyists shall not use any confidential or other insider information obtained in the course of their lobbying activities to the disadvantage of their client...."

That surely makes sense. If you're there for one client, you wouldn't want to give any information that in effect would be doing a disservice to that client.

Finally, on the last page:

"Competing interests

"Lobbyists shall not represent conflicting or competing interests without the informed consent of those whose interests are involved."

In other words, you can't go there for two different groups at the same time, representing two different viewpoints. It's a reasonable suggestion. Why haven't you included that?

"Disclosure

"Consultant lobbyists shall advise public office holders that they have informed their clients of any actual, potential or apparent conflict of interest...."

"Improper influence

"Lobbyists shall not place public office holders in a conflict of interest by proposing or undertaking any action that would constitute an improper influence on a public office holder."

This code of conduct as contained in the federal act is a relatively simple document.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, without even listening to the debate, without even hearing any of the principles I've put forward, has an opinion. I would like somebody to get up and say why —

Mr Hastings: It's violated every day.

Mr Gerretsen: Oh, "It's violated every day," he says.

The point is, sir, this is your piece of legislation, and your piece of legislation is useless unless you include an accepted code of conduct. We have a code of conduct here

that is very limited in scope and very easy to read, and I would seriously suggest that you include it in your legislation if you want to make the legislation meaningful.

There's one other issue that I quickly want to bring to the House, because I know it's getting close to 9:30, and that is: We have an Integrity Commissioner to whom each and every one of us reports on an annual basis, and I think the system works well. This individual, under this act, will now become the commissioner under the Lobbyists Registration Act.

The Integrity Commissioner, the Ombudsman, the Provincial Auditor and the Environmental Commissioner are members of this legislative House. They are servants of this House. They are not servants of the government; they are servants of the House. If this bill is accepted the way you're proposing, in effect what you're saying to our own Integrity Commissioner, who is an officer of this House, is that he will now have to serve two masters. I

have the highest regard for the Integrity Commissioner, I think he's a perfectly fine gentleman, but we are placing him in an untenable situation where he is both a servant of this House, like the Ombudsman, like the Provincial Auditor, like the Environmental Commissioner, and at the same time he is retained by the cabinet or management office as the officer who is responsible for the implementation of this act. It is not acceptable.

I know for a fact there are members in your own caucus, who I hope will step forward, who are very concerned about that. You cannot have an Integrity Commissioner being an officer to this House who is at the same time ultimately responsible to Management Board of Cabinet.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 9:30, this House stands adjourned until 10 tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 2130.

ERRATA

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
43A	Contents	2	45	M. Bisson..... 2511

In the Errata published on page 2507 of report 42B, the number of the report containing the errors should have read "42A."

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 15 October 1998

Jeudi 15 octobre 1998

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers



Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 15 October 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 15 octobre 1998

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

HEALTH CARE ACCOUNTABILITY AND PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR L'OBLIGATION DE RENDRE DES COMPTES À L'ÉGARD DES SOINS DE SANTÉ ET SUR LA DÉCLARATION DES DROITS DES PATIENTS

Mrs Boyd moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to promote patients' rights and to increase accountability in Ontario's health care system /
Projet de loi 50, Loi visant à promouvoir les droits des patients et à accroître l'obligation de rendre des comptes dans le système de soins de santé de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 95(c)(i), the honourable member has 10 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I must say how pleased I am to finally be at a point where we're doing second reading of this bill. It's high time the people of Ontario understood what their rights as patients are and had a clear picture of how the government of the day will be held accountable for Ontario's health care system.

Before I continue, I want to acknowledge the support and help of a number of organizations in developing the bill. The Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, the Ontario Nurses' Association, the Ontario Hospital Association, the Service Employees International Union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union have all worked with us in terms of the content of this bill and we are very grateful for the support they have given us.

This is actually a very simple bill. It is not a bill that will be earth-shaking to people out there in their communities because they may believe they already have the kind of rights that are enshrined in here, but in fact they do not. It is important for us to ensure that there is great awareness among people of the need for a codification of the kinds of rights patients have, particularly when, as we know, the health care system is under real stress.

The preamble of the bill simply outlines what the basis of having patients' rights defined is all about. It basically says that the principles enshrined in the Canada Health Act ought to be principles wherever people receive their care, whether it's with hospitals and doctors currently covered by the Canada Health Act, or in their homes, their communities, a long-term-care facility and so on. Many people don't understand that those protections are not there for them in settings other than hospital and physician care.

We're basically saying that access to health care services is a social right that should be enjoyed by all citizens of Ontario.

The second section of the bill is what has been dubbed the Patients' Bill of Rights. I think I can do no better than simply read out what it is we are proposing.

Subsection 2(1) of the bill reads:

"Every resident of Ontario has the following rights:

"1. The right to receive all necessary health care services in a health care system that,

"i. is accessible, universal, comprehensive and publicly administered and funded,

"ii. offers freedom of choice,

"iii. provides timely treatment,

"iv. does not allow personal income to determine access to health care services, and

"v. recognizes that every provider of health care services is a valued member of a multidisciplinary health care team.

"2. The right to give or refuse consent to the provision of health care services.

"3. The right to all information necessary to make fully informed health care choices, including information about who will provide particular services and about the qualifications of those providers.

"4. The right to receive publicly funded health care of high quality in the home and in the community as well as in health care facilities.

"5. The right to receive information, whether in a health care facility or in the community, about choices that promote good health and measures that prevent illness and accident.

"6. The right to be dealt with by health care service providers,

"i. with courtesy and respect,

"ii. in a manner that recognizes individual dignity and privacy and promotes individual autonomy,

"iii. in a manner that recognizes and responds to individual needs and preferences, including those based on ethnic, spiritual, linguistic, familial and cultural factors,

"iv. without mental, physical, sexual or financial abuse.

"7. The right to participate in any assessment of personal care requirements and in the development of plans for care.

"8. The right to make complaints, raise concerns and recommend changes without fear of interference, coercion, discrimination or reprisal.

"9. The right to be informed of,

"i. the laws, rules and policies affecting providers of health care services, and

"ii. the procedures for initiating complaints about providers of health care services.

"10. The right to confidentiality of health care records in accordance with the law."

I dare say there are people in Ontario who imagine they already have these kinds of rights, but the reality is that story after story, experience after experience, research after research shows us that in fact this ideal is far from the practice in many areas.

We believe very strongly that a responsible health care system needs to have both responsible health care providers and responsible patients. There is a tendency these days for health care providers to blame patients for the fact that the system is, and I use quotation marks, "overused," that patients "demand too much." If you don't know what you are entitled to have, it's easy to demand too much.

We are saying that the information that patients ought to have is essential for their making good health care choices, for their being appropriate and responsible citizens in the use of that health care.

How would we ensure that these rights were met? We have a very simple solution, that we have a Health Care Standards Commissioner similar to the Environmental Commissioner, who would oversee the evolution of the standards and would report to this Legislature about the success of various institutions and indeed the system as a whole and, of course, the ministry in meeting those needs.

The commissioner would be an officer of the Legislature, not a creature of the Ministry of Health. The commissioner would not develop the standards because that would be inappropriate. The commissioner would work with the colleges of the registered health professions, would work with the OHA, the Ontario Nursing Home Association, the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, the Association of Community Care Access Centres and, indeed there may be others like the Community Hospice Association of Ontario, with whom they would work to develop standards for care, clinical best practices and the standards that health care facilities need to meet.

It would be up to the professionals to set those standards. It would be up to them to reach a consensus about what those standards are. Then it would be the job of the commissioner to let us all know what those standards are, so we know whether those standards are being met.

1010

There are many people in this province who think that if they go into an emergency room with a cut finger they should be served within 30 minutes, regardless of whether someone is having a heart attack in the bed next to them or a road traffic accident has been brought in. If people understood the standards of care, if there were consistent standards of care, if we knew what to expect, we wouldn't be in the position of being accused of having inappropriate demands on the system.

The commissioner would let us know what those are. The commissioner would then report yearly to this body, to all of us, as the responsible representatives of the people of Ontario, on the success of meeting those standards, and would simply in that act ensure that whatever government of the day is in power, if the government is shown to be failing to fund facilities appropriately, if the government is showing that it's failing to give the policy directives that meet those standards, then the government of the day would be held responsible. But so would the health care providers, so would health care facilities, so would all those working in the system. It would become a much more accountable system.

The last element is that there needs to be whistleblower protection for those health care providers who work for an employer and who know that the employer is not meeting standards. There needs to be a way to maintain the confidentiality of patients and of providers who make complaints under this system. Otherwise, the fear of reprisal is very great. We are never more vulnerable than when we are ill or injured. We are quite literally at the mercy of our health care providers. We ought not to be afraid to complain when standards are not being met in that vulnerable position, and neither should providers be who blow the whistle on their employers when their employers are failing to meet the standards that have been set by their professional association.

We believe this is the way to make this system more accountable. We know the minister has promised similar legislation; we have not seen that. She promised it last April to the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario and the Ontario Nurses' Association. We have not seen that legislation. This is an opportunity for the government to support this legislation.

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I'm pleased to rise and respond to the bill put forward by the member for London Centre. I do have to commend her for bringing this piece of legislation forward. It's an interesting observation that the third party has brought forward some sensible principles that will form part of its health care platform, I would assume, in the next election. I think they're hitting some important notes. It's good to see a constructive bill brought forward in this House from across the floor, as opposed to something that's more into fearmongering or some resolution that's used for a political trap or something. It's good to see something substantial from across the floor.

From the health care perspective it is agreed that the goal of any kind of health care reform is to ensure that we

have the best-quality care provided to patients on a timely basis, at the most appropriate place, from the most appropriate caregiver. At the same time, it's important to make sure patients and health care professionals are involved in improving that system. I would state that we have made great strides in improving the health care system in Ontario in terms of working to coordinate care, making sure that dollars are going into priority services like cardiac care, kidney dialysis, cancer care, and hip and knee replacement surgeries.

At the same time, as I said, the member for London Centre makes a good point: It's important to get the patients involved in that process. One method that she has brought forward is the Patients' Bill of Rights, which would describe to patients what they can expect from our health care system.

We have to realize that the government, in a publicly provided service like health care is in Canada and in Ontario, is a monopoly deliverer of services. As such, it's important to have checks and balances on the system to ensure that those who pay for the system and pay into the system receive the quality care they should expect as Canadians and as Ontarians.

The notion of a patients' safety act is very important. If you look at other jurisdictions across North America, and the United Kingdom as well — their approach has been on a standards basis, to try to reduce waiting times, to indicate to people who pay into the system what would be an appropriate waiting time for cardiac surgery, hip and knee replacements. Interestingly, by and large the standards they set in the UK are actually weaker than we are currently achieving in Ontario, but there is an example of something that's going on in another jurisdiction. In the US House of Representatives, a bill was brought forward similar to this, in this vein. The goal there was ensuring there would be appropriate standards in the HMOs, what patients could expect as a minimal level of service.

The member for London Centre had said, correctly, that the Minister of Health, Minister Witmer, in her discussions with nurses and other health care providers across the province has said she is very interested in this type of legislation, whether it's a patient safety act, a Patients' Bill of Rights — some way of ensuring there are standards across the system so patients will receive the quality of care they deserve and that there are checks and balances in case they aren't. Or you could approach it, as I said, as in other jurisdictions, where you would set standards of care to make sure health care providers would either achieve those standards or report on them, to make the system as transparent as possible.

I think the minister would be wise to evaluate the merits of this bill, to look at what's going on in other jurisdictions, to confer with stakeholders like the hospital association, the nurses' association, the different colleges, to see how the complaints system is currently working, how we can improve it. Bill 25 you could even say is part of that process. We're trying to reduce the red tape so complaints through the colleges can be solved in the quickest time frame possible.

Generally, I commend the member for London Centre for bringing forward a positive principle, a very important suggestion for a policy plank. This government has shown interest in these principles. That is also typical of the member for London Centre, who tends to bring forward weighty matters that she is interested in providing advice on, improving the health care system, unlike her counterpart in the official opposition, who tends to be more like the Jerry Springer of health care, trying to bring forward whatever horror stories, his flyers on windshields. I don't find the approach of the member for York South to be nearly as responsible or as productive as the evidence they're bringing forward from London Centre on the Patients' Bill of Rights.

I might say one thing, somewhat facetiously, but I need to say it at the same time: One important part that I would suggest adding to the Patients' Bill of Rights is a right for patients in Ontario to have a fair share of health care dollars from the federal government in Ottawa. Certainly, after \$2 billion in cuts to health care to the province of Ontario and the federal share of health care dollars slipping to about eight cents on the dollar, one could say that Ontario patients have a right, from all the taxes they've put forward to Ottawa, to expect a fair share back from the coffers in the capital city.

The last time we were here in this chamber we had asked the member for York South, when he had Allan Rock at his fundraiser and they were dancing cheek to cheek, to whisper in his ear and say, "Listen, Minister Rock, could you please increase the transfer payments to the province of Ontario, put back some of that \$2 billion that you took from the system." I haven't heard if, when they were dancing cheek to cheek at the fundraiser, the member for York South brought this forward. Hopefully he did. I certainly hope the federal government will reconsider its move to slash \$2 billion in health care funds to the province of Ontario and reinvest that.

To sum up — I have a couple of colleagues who want to add to this bill; I'm getting the time-out signal — I commend the member for London Centre. I support the principles of this bill. There are some issues in the bill that my colleagues may address, but again I commend her for bringing forward a very positive policy plank. We thank her for bringing it to the floor for debate today.

1020

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I look forward to being able to speak to this bill. First of all, I want to commend the member for London Centre for bringing forth, again, such an act to protect the people of Ontario. It wasn't too long ago, approximately two years ago, that the then member for Oriole, Elinor Caplan, brought forth Bill 41, An Act to protect the Rights of Persons receiving Health Services in Ontario. We know it received first and second readings and then was referred to the committee of the whole by this government, knowing full well that it would never ever receive debate.

We have an opportunity now to look at the bill in depth. This is an extension of Bill 41, but Bill 50 spells out initially in some of its proposals exactly what the then

member for Oriole, Elinor Caplan, had said was going to happen and what we needed protections from. Indeed, the member for London Centre paints an even worse scenario, and she's absolutely right. The critical need for this legislation has grown over the course of the last two years, so I commend her for bringing forth this legislation.

There are certainly many aspects of this legislation that must be debated more fully, but the underlying principle is that everyone — everyone — in Ontario should have a health care system that is accountable, a health care system that is accessible and a Patients' Bill of Rights that is truly meaningful and appropriate for each specific case brought forth to our health care system. That is certainly a part of our health care system.

The government sometimes forgets, and the member for London Centre will remind us with her bill, that the health care system is owned by Ontarians. It is not a government health care system. The health care system of Ontario is the people's health care system, and our people, Ontarians, must understand, must be assured, must know that it is equal, accessible and affordable, and that built within that system there are rights they have. That's why this legislation, Bill 50, is an excellent stepping stone to what was begun with Bill 41 by our former health critic Elinor Caplan.

I commend the member, because she outlines very specifically what must be done to ensure those safeguards. I look forward to — at least I hope that the people of Ontario can have confidence that this government will support this bill on second reading, that it will send this bill to committee so that the front-line workers, the people who use the system, will have an opportunity to reinforce the message that this is critical to the people of Ontario. People in Ontario want to have confidence that indeed their health care system is the best health care system in Canada or in the world.

They clearly don't have that confidence right now. We've heard, over the course of the last two and a half or three years, the horror stories. The member for Niagara South says there are horror stories out there and that we bring them up in the House. These are real stories, and if he chooses to use the adjective "horror," then that is a condemnation of his government's performance in the health care system today.

I suggest to the government that it's time you listened to what the people of Ontario are saying. It's time you listened to what the opposition has been telling you. It's time you listened to the realities out there in Ontario. Our health care system is not at the level it should be. Our health care system is lacking in both resources and in response times. Our health care system needs fixing. It's your responsibility to ensure that happens, and I suggest that Bill 50 is a very good step in that direction.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): When it comes to health care in the province today, the question I hear asked most often by my own constituents, and as I've crossed the province I gather it's a universal sentiment, is, where's the caring? Where is the healing that used to go on in the health care system? Where's the comfort? Even

in a very sort of hokey way, the people I speak to about health care, those who have experienced health care in the last three years and those who have been in support of those who have been in our health care system, is, where is the love? Where is that compassion that used to be in the system, that little extra that people used to do and have come to expect, that made all the difference re the question of actual and real healing?

This bill we're talking about here this morning will go a long way to determining just what the level of health care should be and is necessary to be in this province, something that we together as a collective determine is what we all deserve when we get sick and go to a health care facility to get cured, to get healed and, at the end of the day, hopefully to get better.

In my community, the feeling these days is that going to a health care facility is akin to going to Canadian Tire to get your muffler fixed or to get your carburetor replaced. It's not about healing any more. It's about efficiency, it's about the bottom line and it's about cost. This bill today will go a long way to determining what health care really means and to bring back into the system those things that are so valuable in health care.

Another term you hear when you speak to hospital officials today, as they try to explain why some of these things are missing when people go into the hospital, is that we no longer give what they call hotel care to people, the stuff that speaks to the question of healing, speaks to the question of caring and comfort. The love in the health care system — things like a glass of water or perhaps a back rub — may seem to some superfluous or out of the ordinary or extra, but for the person in the hospital who's trying to recover, who's trying to heal from a very serious and disruptive procedure of some sort, it's absolutely essential that those kinds of things be there. There's the question of who feeds somebody who can't feed themselves, not to speak of the issue of universality of access to care.

We have an issue in Sault Ste Marie that started with the question of the kind of care we provide to the people who live in the outlying district around us, Algoma, Thessalon and St Joe's Island. The member for Algoma will relate to this. What is the level of care that those people should expect and what are the timelines? What access should they have to facilities when they are sick or in crisis? We're moving more and more of what used to be taken for granted and necessary in that part of Algoma and we're moving it into the Soo. Now we're finding that that which we took for granted would be available in Sault Ste Marie is being moved to places like Sudbury and Toronto. Sudbury is 180 miles away. When you need care immediately, 180 miles is a long distance, particularly in the wintertime and particularly over the kinds of roads that we sometimes experience up in that part of this province, not to speak of the cost to the person and their family as they try to be there with that person as they get fixed and get well.

This bill today will, in my mind, in my view, go a long way to answering those very important questions for those

people out there across this province. I congratulate the member from London for bringing it forward and certainly I'll be supporting it here this morning.

1030

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I find this bill typical of the member from London Centre, if I might say, and typical generally of the members of her party in that it is quite clear in its intent, its direction and its motivation; there's no doubt as to just what is intended by this bill and where this bill intends to take us. I congratulate her on that and I commend her for that and I commend the members of her party for that general approach. When it comes to the members of the third party, it is absolutely clear where they stand on the issues they bring forward. There is no equivocation and there is no doubt as to what their position is.

I contrast that with what we've come to expect from the opposition, the Liberal Party. In the case of health care policy, for example, the entire policy of the opposition party could be expressed within the confines of the average bumper sticker.

This bill is very clear in expressing certain principles and various methods of delivering on those principles, and I commend the member for that.

I certainly commend the principles of public accountability in health care policy: that where the public dollar is being put towards a policy, the public is entitled to know just what the goals of the system are and just what the expectations of the system are, and that there be mechanisms for accountability as far as those goals and expectations are concerned. Those are important principles and those are clearly at the heart of this bill, and I support the bill for that reason. The public is entitled to know what sort of quality to expect from its health care system, to have certain service standards and to have certain access standards. To the extent that the bill stands for that, this bill is something to be supported.

The concept behind this bill is not a novel one. It's a concept that has been adopted elsewhere in the world. Certain principles are in legislation in the United Kingdom concerning standards for waiting time and standards for service to be expected. That is already in place in the UK. New Zealand similarly has certain investigative procedures. There are procedures in this bill as well. New Zealand has procedures that are part of its law, and there's no reason that can't be implemented elsewhere. So a number of recommendations in this bill are not new ideas, and they are certainly worthy of thorough consideration before this House.

I am encouraged to know that the Minister of Health is reviewing this very issue and is examining the legislation that is in place elsewhere in the world and is meeting with the various professional bodies involved in health care and is going to be taking all of those thoughts into account in the ultimate introduction of legislation on the government side here.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Meetings and announcements.

Mr Parker: I hear from the opposite side that there's some criticism that the health minister hasn't done this already. The third party had five years in which to bring forward legislation like this. They didn't do it when they were in government. During the fifth year of their government, they hardly sat at all in this Legislature. They had the chance to bring this forward when they were in government. It's nice that they're bringing it forward now.

There is very much in this bill to support. There is a great deal in this bill that requires further debate and discussion, and I look forward to the whole issue being discussed more fully at another time, more time than we have available to us this morning.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I'm very pleased to speak in support of the bill today being brought forward by the third party. I can tell you that it is long overdue. We should have had a bill like this in place for the last 20 years. There has been significant change in health care over the course of the last decade, certainly over the last 15 years.

When you come from a community like mine, Windsor, that has seen such dramatic change, only to hear the Minister of Health constantly talk about having done more for the health system than any other government, the people in Windsor say, no, you've done more to the health system, not for the health system. Windsor is a very good example, where something like a bill of rights for patients would actually be very useful.

The difficulty I see is that unfortunately people have to have the bad experience in the health system so that the bill then becomes enacted for them. There has to be a complaint. That's the difficulty. What we're trying to do is advocate for patients before they get in a position where they're the individual who's lying on a stretcher looking up at the ceiling in the emergency room, wondering, "Why am I still here?" after the second day. The point is that we are to advocate for patients before they get in that dire position. We are amazed in Windsor to see that finally, today in the Toronto area, hospitals are rerouting patients who are arriving in ambulances to emergency rooms. Windsor has been dealing with this for three years.

In this past summer alone, Windsor has seen 230 code 7s, just in the months of July and August and the first week of September. That means that 230 times patients could not be removed from the ambulance into the emergency room because there was no room in emergency. What's worse is that it was entirely preventable and completely predictable. The worst part about sounding like a broken record is that it has been going on and on and we've been saying it and saying it.

These individuals, as difficult as it is to be in a very vulnerable position, are finally speaking out. They're saying, "This is not the kind of treatment I deserve," not after having been in business, like Lyall Browning, all his life, a 35-year businessman, retired, who entered the hospital system and left sicker than when he went in. He said: "This is not why I paid taxes all my life. I deserve better than this." If there is a bill of rights for patients, the

unfortunate thing is that in this system, with this government, it still would have happened to him.

That's what we have to do: We have to look at why this is happening to patients and prevent it, and not just focus on what we do when it's happening. We're saying don't let it happen. Windsor was a perfect case that all of you should have learned from. I expect all those organizations out there that are supposed to be promoting good health to look very specifically at the Windsor scenario and say, "Don't let this happen in any other place in Ontario."

We travelled to Sudbury and the same thing is now happening in Sudbury. It's no surprise to us in Windsor, because we could see this coming. You took money out of the hospital budgets before you allowed proper restructuring, expected savings from the same organizations you cut, so any savings that were going to be found through restructuring you've already taken out of their hospital budgets. It is an untenable position for them. They are not dealing well with this change. The result is they are making choices: either cutting service or going in deficit. As the OHA reported last Friday, 50% of all Ontario hospitals are now in debt. No surprise to us, who have been following this issue closely; no surprise because we told you it was happening when they were going into debt.

We go back to my place in Windsor and see a highway sign that the Premier put up that says, "Our tax dollars at work." We're trying to tell people, "We want our tax dollars back." When we suggested to people that we want to hear what they think about wasting taxpayers' money on propagandizing highway signs when our hospital system is in such desperate need of funding, this is what people in Windsor had to say:

Paolo Gattoni says, "It's a shame to have one MRI in a city with a population of our size." Mrs Renaud says, "Get your priorities straight." Roy Bertelli says, "Our hospitals need help, not signs." Mary Lovell says: "My father was treated badly, without proper care or compassion, because of overworked medical people. Then he passed away." These are the people you need to listen to. These are the people who would have to then enact a Patients' Bill of Rights. When you know this is coming to your own neighbourhood, don't let this kind of health care system put people in a position where they are going to need a bill of rights.

1040

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I'm very pleased today to stand in support of Bill 50, at second reading today, from my colleague the member for London Centre. I haven't heard all the Tory members who are going to speak today, but I'm disturbed so far by what I hear. I'm getting the impression that although they speak very kindly in support of the principle of this bill, they seem to be saying they're waiting for the Minister of Health to come forward with her version of such a bill.

My understanding is that the Minister of Health promised she'd look at ideas from the nurses' association last April. We haven't heard a thing since. I'm also disturbed to hear the member for Niagara South talk about US legislation, for instance, which as you know is a private

system. We fear that's where this government's legislation and policy are taking us. The difference there is that patients there have a right to sue after the fact. They have a right to sue a private health care system if the standards aren't met. That is not what we're talking about here.

I'm further disturbed to hear him say that Bill 25, the red tape bill — I believe he said it was making health care more accountable. In fact, I'd like to point out to him and members of the House, it's the opposite. The red tape bill means that the health care board of appeal will no longer be required to report to the Legislature, so some protections and some accountability that are already in the system because of the red tape bill are being taken away.

I say to the members today that we have no time to wait for the Minister of Health to come forward with her ideas on a Patients' Bill of Rights, or whatever she's calling it. We have emergencies now. The minister is not flowing money, which she continues to announce and announce, to nurse practitioners, which are badly needed up north. Look at the problems we're having, the crises we're having, in our emergency wards right now. This government, although they don't like to admit it, have taken up to \$1 billion out of hospitals.

They're quite correct when they say the federal Liberals have withdrawn funding from the health care system in Ontario, but at one point the leader of this government, the Premier now, said it was a good thing that the federal government was cutting money in transfer payments to Ontario. It's this government that took \$1 billion out to pay for a tax cut that's mainly benefiting the rich. We all know that. So you cannot crawl out from under that responsibility. You have put our health care system in Ontario in a crisis.

You have an opportunity today to take some steps and say to your own government, "The member for London Centre came forward today with a step that will move us forward." If members here today truly believe that we should be bringing forward some kind of accountability system for patients in Ontario, they should vote for this bill today, let it go to committee, and if you want more discussion, that's the place to have it. A whole bunch of people in the health care sector who know where the problems are have consulted; they have talked about this. This is where the ideas came from. It is time now to take it out to committee and have that discussion. We have no time to waste. The crisis is on us now.

I want to speak for a moment about nurses. I have talked to nurses in hospitals, as some of you may have. It will break your hearts. If you haven't done it, do it. They are sick at heart. They're overworked, they feel that patients aren't safe any more and they're worried about the level of health care they can deliver. That is directly because of the cuts. The nurses need our support today. They need to get this bill out there; they need the discussion happening. They need our help. I have seen nurses close to tears because they're doing their best, in hospitals that are understaffed, to take care of badly injured or ill patients. They feel they don't have the ability to take as good care as they know they should be. It is not their fault, but

they're often taking the blame because they're the front-line people that patients see.

I would urge everybody in this House today to let this bill go forward. Platitudes are not enough today. Let it pass and we will debate it and discuss it in committee hearings as soon as possible, I hope.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I'm pleased to rise in the short time I have to express my support for this bill. I commend the member for London Centre for bringing it forward.

I would say to you that this government certainly has no apologies to make to the people of Ontario in terms of its management of the health care portfolio over the last three and a half years. The first responsibility we had was to restore fiscal responsibility to this province and restore accountability to the health care system. I believe we've done that.

But I must also agree with the member, and therefore commend her for bringing this forward, that our focus must shift from the bottom line to the patient, and I believe it's time to do that. I think there are specific items in this bill that will allow us in this province to do exactly that. I have been at meetings with CEOs of hospitals where I've heard presentations about their fiscal accountability, their fiscal responsibility and, quite frankly, I've been disappointed that I've seen very much about accountability to the bottom line but there wasn't very much said about patient service and patient satisfaction. I think it is time that we address those issues.

When the minister made her announcement in April that she was going to bring forward a Patients' Bill of Rights, she also indicated that that bill would contain such things as accountability and reports that would be required as to the number of nurses, the patient-nurse ratio in a hospital and death-and-disease rates. It would call for accountability on how long patients stay in the hospital and, equally as important, how often patients are readmitted into hospital. So it's not enough to simply talk about the fact that perhaps patient stay in a hospital has been reduced significantly; we have to begin to focus in this province on results, on service to patients.

I am concerned about some of the details of the bill. One of the things we will have to do is take into consideration the recommendations that were made by the member here. It will be very helpful in the discussions we're having with our minister to ensure that some of these very important issues are incorporated in the government legislation that will propose some of these issues.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Algoma, you don't have the floor.

Mr Klees: I hopefully join with all members of this Legislature in supporting this bill in principle. There's no doubt that what gets measured gets done. If we're simply measuring financial results, then we will get financial results. I believe we have to also measure patient care, the results that we're getting on the front lines, the kind of care that's being delivered by the medical professionals. I believe this kind of bill will also restore the responsibility

of the patient, himself or herself, to become an active part of the health care team in this province. That will be very important.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'll be supporting this bill. I'd love to see it go through three readings today. With all the support I'm hearing on the other side of the House, I presume someone will move that it go through all three readings during this very day.

It's interesting to see the strategy of the Conservatives. It's not hard to determine what it is. They've been told by the Premier's office, "What you're supposed to do is you're supposed to praise the NDP for any of their initiatives and say how good the NDP is and those Liberals are the awful people." If the polls were different, if the NDP were at about 40% in the polls and we were about 12% in the polls, they would be doing exactly the opposite.

Interjections.

Mr Bradley: Exactly the opposite, as my friends know.

As Rosemary Spiers said in her article, she warned the NDP about getting into bed with the Conservatives and Reform and so on, so they're not going to. This kind of faint praise you're giving to them is not going to fool the NDP. The way you could actually show your good faith is to support this bill and all three readings today, because I think a lot of members — maybe all the Tory members — will vote for it and then they'll kill it somewhere in committee. They'll send it off to a committee and never really deal with it. They will be currying favour with the NDP and then they'll dash their hopes behind closed doors. You won't fool the NDP. I know because they can't be easily fooled by that kind of trickery.

1050

I'm always amused, and I'm glad the member for Riverdale raised this issue, because she knows that when they get the federal transfer payments they simply take those payments and give them away in a tax cut to somebody, largely the richest people in the province, including Conrad Black, the constituent of the chief government whip.

I can tell you what's going to happen. There are five hospitals in Niagara which are very vulnerable now to closing or severe alteration. Fortunately we're just before the election and now the commission, which was so non-political, it said for so long, is going to be very political. That's the hope we have in Niagara: that those of us who have fought against the closing of the Douglas Memorial Hospital in Fort Erie, the Port Colbourne hospital, West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby, Hotel Dieu in St Catharines and the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital will prevail, but only because there's an election coming up. If they got past an election, you can be darn sure they would be doing in many of those hospitals.

I want to indicate what some of the members have said about this bill. We've seen a significant cut in the operating funds for hospitals and you're seeing it in the degree of care that can be delivered. Quite rightly, the member for Riverdale mentions nurses in this province near tears, exasperated at the fact that they're working extremely

hard, many on 12-hour shifts, to try to provide service to patients but there are far fewer nurses around to provide that; that the hospitals are having a heck of a time keeping their places clean; that all of the services that are ancillary to the delivery of medical care are cut back severely.

I know people will remember that. Dr Beiko in St Catharines has had his patients writing to the MPPs locally saying they can't go to him any more because they've reached a cap, even though they have some severe problems that need the care of an ophthalmologist.

I note as well that they're kicking patients out of the hospitals now quicker and sicker. That's putting tremendous pressure on the home care system, and I note today that there are going to be some cuts overall in Ontario in the funding for that home care system.

Of course the seniors out there are still angry that they are being charged a user fee every time they get some needed medication from this government.

I'm going to support the bill, I'm sure the government will, but I would like to see this bill pass all three readings today.

Mr Christopherson: I would just say to the member for St Catharines that while we all recognize that politics makes for strange bedfellows, they snuck into our room and for the last while we've been asking for our bathrobe because we want out.

Let me first of all compliment my colleague from London Centre, who I think, without question, across the entire Legislature is one of the most highly regarded and respected members to walk these halls. I think anything she brings forward where she has done the kind of research and background she has here deserves to receive the kind of respect and attention that someone of her stature has.

When we talk about the Patients' Bill of Rights, we're talking about a fundamental cornerstone of what ought to be still the best health care system in the world. Unfortunately, I don't think it any longer is. The fact of the matter is that you cannot take \$1 billion out of hospital budgets across Ontario and expect that somehow you've got better service. It's no different from your argument that taking \$1 billion out of the education system somehow makes for a better education system. It's nonsensical.

Listening to the government members, they all talk about their Minister of Health, Elizabeth Witmer. I can remember saying to people at the time she moved from labour to health, "If you like what Elizabeth Witmer did for workers' rights, wait till you see what she does for patients' rights."

That's why at the end of the day this government that's in place now doesn't have the courage to send this to a committee and then put it on an agenda and let public discussion take place around the content of this bill. They won't do it. These backbenchers have learned from their ministers during question period to stand up and say the words and don't worry about any action afterwards because there won't be any. Words are cheap.

I look at what's happening in my own community of Hamilton-Wentworth with the Hamilton Health Sciences

Corp, the second-largest hospital corporation in the entire country, and see that we're \$38 million in debt, and they just announced the other day that they're looking at borrowing to make up that difference. This is the government that talks about the problem of borrowing and debt ad nauseam, and here we have local hospitals, for the first time that I'm aware of in the history of this province, that are taking out bank loans to pay their current bills to keep some semblance of a health care system alive in our communities. Why aren't you talking about that when you're standing up talking about how wonderful your Minister of Health is and how wonderful your government agenda is?

I think two of the most important things that are contained in this bill — first of all is the recognition that publicly funded health care is a social right. We ought to be making that statement. We all like to talk about our health care system and the universality. Certainly as New Democrats, which was the successor to the CCF, which brought in the first universal health care system in the entire continent in Saskatchewan with Premier Tommy Douglas, we're always very proud. But this is the time to move forward and one of the ways to do that is to make the simple legislative statement that publicly funded health care is a social right. Put that in law.

The second thing that I find most important here is the establishment of a Health Care Standards Commissioner. Based on what we've seen as a result of the Environmental Commissioner, which we brought in — you probably couldn't hear it on the mike but at least one of the members of the government backbench went, "Huh." They don't like commissioners who are arm's length from their control who report on what is happening in key areas of government like the environment. It's not a wonder they're upset, because that Environmental Commissioner has belled the cat on a number of key environmental issues. That's exactly what a Health Care Standards Commissioner would do and all governments of all political stripes ought to be held to that standard. That's the way we can actually give the public control and accountability of a health care system that's theirs. You don't have the right to destroy it, and that's what you're all about at the end of the day: destroying our health care system.

The Acting Speaker: Two minutes to reply.

Mrs Boyd: I want to thank all who spoke to the bill and hope that the kind words of the government party translate into this bill actually passing second reading today and going to the social development committee, where it belongs. That is their opportunity to look at the content and the detail of the bill, to do the further consultation in public that the minister says she's doing, in public with all of the players of the system where all of the concerns can come forward in an appropriate way.

I have no reason to assume that when the Minister of Health says she's going to bring something forward she's not speaking in good faith. I assume she is. But she said that in April. She has said it again and again. We haven't seen any action on it. We haven't seen any draft bill come forward. We haven't seen any public consultation — all behind closed doors.

We know that this Minister of Health is very good at allaying the fears of the people of Ontario by making announcements, by reassuring them, by holding meetings, by holding consultations, by saying she's consulting — and doing nothing. If the government members do not pass this bill today and get it into committee for hearings, we will know that this is simply another empty promise, another way of trying to soothe the very real fears that health care providers and health care recipients have in this province.

This is not a problem just for patients. This is becoming a serious problem for providers, who find themselves constantly in danger of violating their own standards, set by their own professions, because they do not have the resources to maintain those standards. It is time that the government, whoever the government is, takes accountability for the health care system.

1100

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I move that, in the opinion of this House, since hospice palliative care is care which aims to relieve suffering and improve the quality of life of people who are living with or dying from advanced illness, or those who are bereaved, the government of Ontario should appoint a task force, representative of the public, recognized hospice palliative care experts, palliative care supporters and providers, both paid and volunteer, from throughout Ontario, to recommend the elements necessary to fully implement an effective hospice palliative care bill of rights. These rights would ensure the best possible comfort, protection and support will be available and accessible to all Ontarians and their families in time of need. The task force would provide interim reports to the government and the public, and continue in existence to review the implementation of its recommendations.

This task force should consider but not be limited to the following issues:

(1) The provision of hospice palliative care that recognizes the need of all people for personal respect, control and dignity. A modern, fully developed hospice palliative care system enables most people to live in their own homes;

(2) The effective provision of the best medical treatments for pain control and the best symptom management practices for other physical suffering, using drug, and non-drug therapies;

(3) Ensuring the development of proper medical treatments for all patients of all backgrounds, social, cultural, or religious, and of any age or illness. The special problems of children and of individuals suffering illnesses of the nervous system, who face much shorter life expectancies, should be considered. Cancer Care Ontario's phased-in supportive care model should be examined for potential applications to the development of hospice palliative care;

(4) The interdisciplinary team care of hospice palliative care must be adapted to work with primary care providers.

Standards for hospice home care, dedicated hospices, nursing homes, supportive housing and hospitals, should be integrated with a compensation structure for hospice palliative care that recognizes its interdisciplinary character;

(5) Medical specialties in hospice palliative care should be recognized in all medical fields. The need to provide a high standard of basic and specialized instruction in palliative care, pain management, symptom control, emotional and spiritual needs and team methods in every profession. An effective information system must update our medical teams with the very latest developments in hospice palliative care, pain control and symptom management;

(6) Research programs to explore new knowledge, in the areas of greatest value to Canadians receiving hospice palliative care, should be a continuing feature of Ontario's medical care system;

(7) The best possible programs to support, train and encourage volunteer care providers and their organizations should be identified and made an integral part of the hospice palliative care system. Volunteers providing hospice palliative care are the ultimate guarantee of community involvement, as well as comfort and concern for the needs of individual people and their families and their bereavement. Existing programs, standards, organizations and proposals ready for pilot projects or expansion should be encouraged. Programs that are individual and innovative, in their own way, can co-operate, providing patient-centred care for Ontarians;

(8) Revising, as required, medical, administrative and legal procedures to ensure effective safeguards for the rights of all those under care, but especially those who cannot, or can no longer, decide issues of medical care for themselves;

(9) How to meet the needs of most Ontarians, in these care programs, by finding the very best methods to gain the full confidence, and participation in patient care, of leaders from all religious, cultural and spiritual communities;

(10) The need for emotional, psychological, social and spiritual support appropriate to the needs of the patient and their family. The right to be treated as a person, and receive proper medical, emotional and spiritual treatment for times of depression and suffering. The need for family members to be consulted, treated with respect and kept informed;

(11) Setting reasonable limits on charges for care, to a patient's life savings, so loved ones need not be left destitute;

(12) Most care in Ontario is provided by spouses or family, to loved ones. A priority must be to consult with these care providers to find ways to encourage and support them, as they meet family responsibilities, with love and loyalty.

Hospice palliative care is care aimed at relieving suffering and improving the quality of life for those people who are suffering from life-threatening or terminal illness. This resolution urges the government of Ontario to appoint

a task force representative of the public to recommend the elements necessary to fully implement an effective hospice palliative care bill of rights. It would ensure that the best possible comfort, protection and support would be available and accessible to all Ontarians. The task force would provide interim reports to the government and the public and continue in existence to review the implementation of its recommendations.

Hospice palliative care has made great strides over the last 30 years, and now is the time to start to make state-of-the-art care available to all Ontarians. On a personal note, my grandmother died some 38 years ago from cancer and my aunt died some three years ago from cancer. The difference in their care over the 38 years is quite astonishing.

In London, Toronto, Ottawa and Kingston, we have integrated palliative care now, in various forms. I might say that further information on this can be obtained through our Ontario legislative library. There are areas of the province where our service is state of the art today; there are other areas where it is very much at an early stage of development.

This resolution sets out in detail what the task force should consider. It has been developed as a result of consultations with experts, volunteers and persons who are receiving or have received care. I'd like to take a moment to thank all of them for the many hours of time they have put in to develop their expertise and to help us in developing this resolution.

The plan in this resolution would help to make life more comfortable and ease the suffering of individuals in care and their families. The best medicine available today that our professionals can offer is made available to help. The bill of rights would enable people to stay in their homes longer and be connected to their family and the small daily joys of life.

What can be accomplished is perhaps well set out by a true story that happened in the London area a couple of years ago. Loree Moores was diagnosed with cancer in 1996. Her health deteriorated. She had to go and live with a son. At the start of her last summer, she noted that she had a 33-year tradition of going to the cottage each summer, and that summer she and her family assumed she couldn't go. The caregivers got together with the family and with her, overcame the obstacles and she was able to go to her cottage. Her cottage became a small hospital. When she arrived, even though she was ill, she noticed the loons and their calls, the smell of the air and trees, the clarity of the water. Three of her four children and six of her grandchildren came up to stay for parts of the summer, and many friends stayed or visited. Loree passed away a couple of weeks after she came back from the cottage, but she had not missed a year at the cottage in the last 34 years of her life.

That really demonstrates what I think we all should be working towards, that everyone can live every day of life to its full potential. I suggest to the House that this is an idea that's time is coming rapidly. I think it will ultimately help almost every person in Ontario.

This resolution, as you would note from a couple minutes ago, is not just the endorsement of a good idea but a very specific plan for action. It's a plan for action that we can start now. It's a very ambitious goal, but I think it's also an attainable goal.

When we talk about ambitious goals, I like to think of something the late US Senator Robert Kennedy often said. He said, "Some people see things as they are and ask why others dream of things that never were and ask why not."

Perhaps as we contemplate this today and contemplate what can be done, we might want to consider that we owe ourselves, our children and our grandchildren no less.

1110

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Further debate?

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I am delighted to speak on the resolution of the member for London South. I compliment him for bringing this resolution to the House today. Having said that, I think it does deserve support; however, I wonder why we need another task force to look after this most important aspect of our health care system, especially where we have to look after the most needy, the older person, the very sick, the ones who have incurable diseases, the ones whose family members really care to have proper, good health care being provided by the government.

It's most unfortunate that we have to resort to this type of resolution or for the government to have to deal with something like this, because this is nothing less than an admission that the government of this province is not providing the care that it should be providing for those people affected with those types of illnesses.

There is a litany of cases that we have brought to the attention of this particular government, and they are not listening. What worries me is not the good intention of the member introducing this resolution; it is that this government won't do anything. We have the Minister of Community and Social Services and the Minister of Health who do nothing else but hash and rehash, announce and re-announce hundreds of millions of dollars to come on to the scene to help those in need, but we have seen nothing. Hospitals haven't seen a dime. They cannot provide the care that we are supposed to provide those people.

I don't think the government — it's immune to what's going on out there, we don't have to tell you, on a daily basis. We shouldn't be telling the government on a daily basis what goes out there with emergency rooms, hospital care. If you were a family member with a member who is in need of such care and they hear this daily news that hospitals are closing emergency rooms, you cannot go here, you cannot go there — 17 out of 19. How do they feel? How does a person feel when their government is letting them down?

I brought to the attention of the Minister of Health a particular case: six hours, a young man who was not even old and ready to go. But the situation is that we don't know when and how; we've got to be ready. When we are in need of such attention, we should be giving it to whoever needs it, whenever they need it. They couldn't find a

room in Metropolitan Toronto after six hours, and another three hours later, they whisked the poor patient to Hamilton general hospital. In the meantime, the young man died on the way there. It was such a pathetic case, such an account from the family members, the family members who got to the hospital before the ambulance.

Every facet of the health care system is being affected, and it's being affected solely because this government wants to reduce the health care system to who can afford it, and if they can't afford it, forget it; you're on your own. It's not a case for the minister or the Premier to come into the House and say: "We have to make changes. We have to make reforms. If you don't get attention in one hour, you're going to get it in three or four hours." I'm sorry. I don't think the people of Ontario are expecting this kind of response or service from their government.

It is a very important issue. Unfortunately, my time is running out, but I would tell the member to listen to what the members of the opposition have to say because we do visit caregiver places in our community and we see the decline in the provision of health care. I would say, don't go into another task force unless you are sure to provide the health care that indeed our people deserve and want.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I am pleased to rise in support of this resolution. I'm surprised that the member for Yorkview questions the need for a task force to look at this very important issue. Clearly we then don't share the importance of the need to ensure that our health care system meets the needs of individuals in our province, particularly in the most difficult hours of their lives.

I've had some experience with the hospice system in our province, and I'm pleased to share with you the fact that we have literally an army of volunteers who very few people in our community know are active in this area of hospice work. They do their work quietly. They do it out of commitment and out of concern and care for individuals in their communities, many times not knowing these individuals personally, but very quickly entering into their lives in a very meaningful way.

I believe the resolution before us and the recommendation for this task force are very much consistent with our government's commitment to ensuring that home care, long-term care, care for the elderly particularly in our province, is enhanced. Previous governments have discussed doing something about long-term care, discussed doing something about matters such as those proposed in this resolution, but we have seen inaction, and another reason and purpose for such a resolution before the House today is that previous governments have not acted. Had they done so when they had the opportunity, we wouldn't need the task force today.

The member for London South is taking the initiative today, and I believe it's a natural extension of the community care access centre initiative that our government has taken. I have had some discussion with three of the hospice organizations in my riding that quite frankly do face difficulty in terms of their ability to deliver their services. Again, it comes back to financial resources. Having the

volunteers there is important. Clearly this kind of work can't be done without the men and women on the front lines providing the care, providing the support, providing the counselling. But nevertheless the infrastructure has to be there, the referral system has to be there, and that takes money. So there is an obligation, I believe, on the part of government, on the part of our Ministry of Health, on the part of our Ministry of Community and Social Services, to look at how this resolution and the work of this task force could be integrated in the overall health care system in our province.

It makes no great sense to me that we should be spending literally billions of dollars treating individuals for their health care needs and spending literally billions on surgical processes and not continuing that same level of service into the most difficult hours of patients in this province, when they need that help the most. I believe there is nothing better that we can do for patients than, as the member so rightfully puts it, to give them the option to spend their final days with family in their homes if that's what their choice is and if that is a practical way of allowing individuals to have their final hours. That is truly an indication of a civil society, and it is civility that I believe brings us to the point of debating this resolution.

I believe there are men and women throughout this province who are willing to give of their time if they knew that the structure was available. I recently had the privilege of joining in the official opening of the Hill House Hospice in Richmond Hill. This is a project that was given leadership by Anne Gold of Richmond Hill, someone who has been involved in home care service for many years. In fact, she has dedicated her career to providing patient care and home care. It was quite an experience, because here we have truly an indication of partnership. The house itself was gifted by an individual in the community. Fund-raising took place. The municipality became involved. Through that creative partnership this home was dedicated to the hospice service.

It had its first patient not many weeks ago. The opportunity now was for this patient to live the last few days in a setting where family was able to come along and provide comfort, but at the same time have the professional care and service there. The professional counselling service and the nursing services were there, but it wasn't in an institutional setting. It was a setting where truly, as the previous speaker indicated, the comfort of home was there and the emotional support was able to be provided.

I will support this resolution and the work of the task force, and certainly would be pleased to become involved in the work of that task force as well in the months and years ahead to ensure that this final stage of patient care is in fact fully integrated into the health care system in our province.

I commend my colleague for bringing this bill forward and look forward to all members of the House supporting this resolution today.

1120

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I wish to say that I believe the issue of palliative care is one that should

be before this Legislature and I believe that many of the items contained within this resolution are certainly supportable. There is considerable discussion of this issue, but the ultimate is a task force. I think the government should instead be implementing many of the recommendations that have already been out there from people in the palliative care field, rather than setting up yet another task force to deal with this issue.

Palliative care, we must know, requires a substantial investment of public funds, something that many members on the government side aren't going to want to hear. Palliative care does not come cheaply, nor should it, because people are at a very vulnerable state in their lives when they are in their last days, and their families are also in difficulty at that time.

It reminded me of the taxpayers coalition meeting that was held in St Catharines a number of years ago, where people were up at the front with veins sticking out in their necks, chanting, "No new taxes," and, "Cut taxes." The result of that is that you have far inferior medical care as a result of money not being available for the hospital system and the hospice system, and as a result we face difficulty, particularly for our senior citizens.

Senior citizens, by nature of their age, are often going to be those who are going to require palliative care. Senior citizens and their families often fear what the last days will be like. When they see a system which now has far fewer nurses in it, far fewer other hospital workers available and restraints being placed on doctors, they are very concerned as they meet this difficult time in their lives.

They remember the promise of Premier Harris during the last election campaign when he said: "Certainly, I can guarantee you it is not my plan to close hospitals." They find now that there are 35 hospitals in this province that have either been closed or forced to merge, and other facilities which have been forced to curtail their services.

This is going to require a considerable investment. This is going to require a lot of hospitals and hospices that are going to be available to people if it is to be successful. I suggest the government could use the money that it is squandering on advertising — self-serving, partisan political advertising — in the health care services. When they open up the newspaper and see the full-page, self-congratulatory ads, when they turn on the television set and hear the jingles and commercials extolling the virtues of the government, when they listen to the radio and hear those commercials, when they go their mailbox and see the glossy pamphlets that are provided by the government, again self-congratulatory, each time they can think that money could be spent on palliative care in this province where it would be most directly beneficial to people, not to the Progressive Conservative Party.

They would know that if you didn't have those road signs with the Premier's name on them, saying, "Your Ontario tax dollars at work — Premier Mike Harris," like some American Governor having these signs all over the province, they would know that money could be spent on palliative care.

They would know that the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board, established by this government, is simply a pre-election publicity boondoggle for the Premier, trying to get re-election on the back of this particular organization. Its first action was to send out a glossy pamphlet to every person in Ontario with government propaganda on it, and to issue newsletters, glossy and glittering, again extolling the virtues of the policies of this government. If only that money were available to palliative care in this province, I would be heartened.

I note as well that people will want to ensure there is publicly funded health care available to them. Dr Duncan Sinclair, chairman of the Ontario Health Services Restructuring Commission, learned first-hand what a difference private insurance makes when his back started to hurt. The treatment his doctor recommended was physiotherapy. His choice was to wait two or three months for the hospital to get around to it, or go the very next day for electric acupuncture, something covered only by private insurance.

He chose acupuncture. His back felt better the same day, but his moral sense felt worse. I quote him, "I worry very substantially about the growing inequity in Canada between people who are able to pay for private health insurance and those who can't," he said yesterday in Ottawa. Indeed, this is the man responsible, who has been given the chore and task of closing hospitals in this province.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): As members in this place know and certainly as people at home in London know, it's very seldom that the member for London South, Mr Wood, and I, as the member for London Centre, agree on anything, so I am really pleased to be able to stand today and speak to his motion.

While I understand the reluctance of the Liberals and indeed some of my own party to endorse a task force to look at palliative care, because I am a member of a country-wide committee that has been set up to look at this issue, I am also aware that the lack of public awareness and the lack of examination by government policy-makers, by those in the general community, about care for the dying is a very big problem.

I think the mechanism the member has suggested, the task force mechanism, may help us to raise public awareness. That's important because we are a death-denying society. We are a society that tends to focus on those kinds of services which can cure us of illness or resolve an injury issue, and we tend to bury, in our very modern way, the fact that all of us at some point or other will die.

The objective of palliative care, hospice care, is to ensure that our quality of life is maintained to death, that even though we may face short hours, days or months of life, there is some mechanism to make whatever time we have left a time when we can appreciate fully our own humanness and have the kind of dignity and respect and care we deserve.

It's interesting that most of us who have stood to speak have some personal experience with offering palliative care. That certainly is so in my case. Not only did my family work with my father for almost 19 years after he

had been told he had less than a year to live and manage to maintain him at home almost to the point of his death, but similarly with my mother, who was diagnosed with cancer in 1989 and went through treatments and already had a serious problem with emphysema, for whom no more treatment was recommended in 1990. She lived until 1995 and during those five years I, as the primary caregiver who lived with her during that time, and my brother and sisters and the rest of our extended family committed ourselves to providing the kind of end-stage experience that we would want for ourselves.

1130

I think that's the important thing about palliative hospice care: It is very respectful of the desires and wishes of the individual who is experiencing their own mortality. People often make different choices than you or I think we might make under the circumstances. The purpose of palliative hospice care is to be very mindful that when we have very few choices left, the exercise of each of those choices is important.

Our party is very clear that we need to be providing health care services to everybody at each stage of life and wherever those services are offered. So the principles that are outlined in the member for London South's resolution are principles to which we can subscribe.

I spoke at the beginning about being part of a nationwide group looking at the issue of palliative hospice care and I'd like to tell people a little bit about it. This is a group that was brought together under the auspices of the Employee Foundation, a charitable foundation founded by employees of Glaxo Wellcome, a company that has a very large establishment out in Mississauga. The employees chose — they had freedom of choice — to look at palliative care largely because they themselves, as family members, had experienced the issue of palliative hospice care and felt that there needed to be some nationwide concentrated effort on informing people about what palliative care was all about, outlining what issues are facing us and encouraging government and private funders to understand the importance of supporting appropriate palliative care.

One of the first things the Employee Foundation at Glaxo Wellcome did was to commission a study by Angus Reid, adding questions to an Angus Reid poll about hospice palliative care. That poll was undertaken in August 1997. A random representative cross-section of 1,500 Canadian adults was polled to see what their level of knowledge was on the issue of palliative hospice care. It's very interesting that in this poll only 53% of Canadians knew about hospice care. They recognized that term only in 53% of cases, and only three in 10, 33%, identified hospice care with that end stage of life, with care of the dying. It was interesting to note that awareness was greatest where there had been leadership by governments, because of specific health care problems, in raising that awareness.

It's very important that a task force, if one is set up by this government, would use the work that has already been done. The Glaxo Wellcome Employee Foundation work is very important. Last November, we were all brought

together. There were representatives from right across this whole country, people who worked in community hospices, people who worked in hospital-based palliative care, physicians, nurses, volunteers, family members, people who were themselves undergoing the experience of living through the end stage of their own lives. We were brought together for an intensive think-tank about how to get palliative care to the top of the agenda in the health care system.

The urgency, of course, is because so many of us are going to be moving into our senior years. The urgency of the numbers of us who will be entering into the end stage of our lives predictably over the next 25 years means that we have to find a better way of dealing with the reality that each of us is mortal and that each of us has a right to enjoy life to the very last second. We can't do that if we are not sure that we will be cared for appropriately.

One of the other studies that Glaxo Wellcome financed was a summary of qualitative research. That was quantitative research in terms of people's awareness of hospice care, but this was qualitative research that was undertaken to try and determine what the issues were.

This study, which was written by a woman named Melinda Head and was, as I say, submitted to Glaxo Wellcome in August 1997, this research clearly showed some of the issues and it's very important. It would be the kind of base research the task force would need to look at. Let me read you a couple of things observed by people who participated in that qualitative research. It's very important because these are people engaged in hospice palliative care.

The first quote is:

"Unfortunately the dead don't vote and the dying don't have enough energy to affect policy change.

"There has to be a commitment (by government) to care in the home. If they are (committed), they should put in the adequate support to allow people to do that. We try to do the best we can" — this is a hospice worker speaking — "but we are really only gap-fillers. People often need professional help more than the government is funding. If we can't put in through-the-night nursing, this makes the difference between allowing a patient to stay at home or not. If we can't provide that support, the only other alternative we have is in-patient beds and they are sorely lacking."

Another quote:

"There is no money. We are told the country is broke, so they take it out of health care. Palliative care is all about providing dignity to people. It's sometimes difficult to ensure someone's dignity when there are no beds and they have to sit in emergency rooms, when males and females are mixed in four-bed units. Sometimes we can't provide medication due to cost factors."

Another quote:

"If you choose to die at home, you are confronted with big bills for very expensive pain medications because they are not covered by your provincial health plan. While in hospital, everything is paid for. Once you're home, certain

things, but especially medications, may not be covered and will become a financial drain.

"Continuous pump control" — the medication that is pumped by the person as they need it — "in the home is very expensive and so are the drugs. If they can't afford it, they will stay in the hospital. Some people need one nursing visit a day and the rest of the family can pick up the slack, but once you are out of the hospital, nothing is covered by the government. There is not affordable respite care, nowhere for someone to go if the family can't take it any more.

"Medications and drugs are funded within the palliative care unit. Once a patient moves back home, it is their responsibility to fund it. This places a tremendous burden on families."

This one is from a person working in hospice care in Ontario:

"Top of the list is not having enough money to provide overnight care. In Ontario the number of hours is not enough. Someone gets 56 hours of care per week; that is eight hours a day. Either they can shift that support to overnight care, but then they have no one there during the day unless they have a spouse who doesn't work, or friends, or a partner or whatever that will be with them. At best, we can't get more than seven volunteers in who will do a shift of four to five hours. There's still more hours in the day that are left over. There's still a huge gap."

I've experienced that gap. It wasn't until January 1995, when my mother was confined to bed, that I finally realized I couldn't do all-night care and maintain my responsibilities here. That was when I became really aware of how little support is available in the community.

The member for London South said that we should look at making sure that families aren't bankrupted by looking after palliative care patients, and he's right. In our family, our only alternative was to hire additional help to make sure the care was provided. In the last months of my mother's life we were paying anywhere from \$6,000 to \$8,000 a month to ensure that that kind of care was there, and that was in addition to the entitlement we had through the palliative care provision of home care. Most families are not fortunate enough to have those kinds of dollars, yet those dollars are very small compared to the cost of keeping people in hospital.

1140

The member is also saying we need to have care both in the hospital, when that's necessary, and the best place for care, at home. I couldn't agree with him more. Very often the desire is to keep someone at home, but there are different circumstances that make it necessary for the person to be in a hospital. They shouldn't be going into hospital through emergency departments, where their entire care plan comes under question by an emergency doctor whose focus is dealing with the immediate symptoms and with trying to cure or save someone who may in fact be in a situation where they know they are in the process of dying, where they have made decisions about not wanting heroic efforts taken. We need to be very clear that there are ways to do that. The member for London South and I know that

the palliative care unit at Parkwood Hospital, for example, has an ongoing relationship with families going through this kind of situation. In the ideal circumstance a person would go directly to that unit and have the appropriate care based on their care plan rather than going through an emergency department, where the focus obviously is different than it is in palliative care.

At every single instance where I've attended an MPP briefing by the hospital restructuring commission, I have questioned the commission about the issue of palliative care. It is missing from most of the reports; in fact, we are losing palliative care beds in this province as a result of their recommendations. That is a very foolish move, not only in terms of the human needs of people, which I would say are paramount, but financially foolish. If we are providing appropriate palliative care, we are not doing expensive interventions that will not affect the length of the person's life and may actually affect negatively the quality of their life.

For those of us who have been engaged in this, we have a commitment and a sense that it is important that people become educated about the importance of this service. I have great faith that the people of Ontario believe this is a service that needs to happen. I think we need to take leadership in ensuring that it does.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's my privilege to speak this morning in support of the resolution by the member for London South on the very important issue of hospice and palliative care. I listened attentively to the member for London Centre, who has just spoken. Respectfully, I know her commitment to this and I'm very pleased to remark that she is in support of the member for London South's resolution, which clearly illustrates that there are issues that this House listens to and responds to.

How do I respond to this? In my role as a backbencher and a person who tries to listen to constituents, I know just how important this issue is not only to me but to every member in this House. It really starts with how you see your own world. On a personal note — I hate to digress, Mr Speaker — I will share with you a story very similar to the member for London Centre's story. Some years ago my mother passed away, fortunately in the care of her family. Also very fortunately — and not all families are as fortunate — I have two sisters who are trained nurses. One, in fact, works in respite services as I speak, more or less. Both of them took time off to make sure that my mother's final days were marked with support and love and tenderness and trained caring.

It's extremely important that we recognize that the role of the family is instrumental in this. We can't allow government to take over all the responsibilities for people's lives. I think that's the intent of this resolution, to first recognize the importance of the hospice and palliative care role and the dignity of those who are in need of that service.

That's at the personal level. But I would like to also recognize what's actually happening in the region of Durham, in my riding. In my research, I was very impressed: On September 12 of this past month, Her Honour

the Lieutenant Governor, Hilary Weston, attended an important recognition of volunteers working for Hospice Durham. She was there to hand out recognition to this very important group, primarily made up of volunteers. Out of respect for those volunteers, I did some research and found out that the Hospice Durham story is indeed a story of people wanting to make a difference, starting, as many initiatives do in this province, with the volunteers themselves.

Respectfully, I have to say that is an important initiative of this government as well. Marilyn Mushinski from Scarborough-Ellesmere is leading an important initiative to recognize the role of volunteers.

Hospice Durham's story started in June 1988 with its first steering committee meeting, made up of people with a sense of caring about the community. They did a needs assessment through the Durham district health council at the time, in 1989. So you can see that many governments of the day have had a role in this. I'm sure there were supportive dollars to get this initiative started. The inaugural board meeting was in 1990. Just to bring us more up to date, in 1995 they had a total number of 63 active volunteers, in 1996 it grew to 83, in 1997 it grew to 91, and I'm pleased to tell you that as of September, it's my understanding, it has grown to over 100 volunteers, many of whom do it with quiet dignity, very much in the climate of the whole palliative care environment. It's people helping people, not essentially looking for recognition.

What I hear from volunteers today in Ontario is that just recognition, just a thank you — and I say today to all the volunteers, thank you for giving your time to people whose lives are coming to an end, and bringing dignity. Their homes are the appropriate surroundings; they're comfortable surroundings, with their friends, their family. They need support from the community.

I looked also at the current board that was just taken in. For the record I want to mention a number of people, many of whom I know: Reverend Richard Hamilton, who is a Free Methodist minister, is the president of Hospice Durham; the vice-president is Reverend David Smith — you can see the important role of the clergy and the church; the treasurer is Brent Farr; the secretary is a well-known constituent of mine, Jenny Walhout; and the past president is John Fowles, a very well respected member of the community in that area. The volunteer board members, many of whom are known to me personally, are Neale and Shirley McLean, who live in Bowmanville, Cathy Plue, John Skinner, Diane Bennett, Peggy Dickerson and Guy May. This is just the immediate list of volunteers who serve in many capacities, some of which aren't board of directors or administrator duties but providing hands-on care to real people.

I always have to drive that down. I go back to the vision of my mother, my sisters, my family, and having the right skills in the right place at the right time. Clearly, all of us have to work together as a community in this area.

There was a very touching story related that day about a person who was a close friend of our family. He was a high school teacher at the time. In fact, his involvement in

my life involved his son, who's a friend of mine, and he was also a teacher of my son at one time. He was a volunteer sports coach and participated in lots of activities. Mel Putnam passed away just over a year ago of cancer. His dying days were supported by his wife and the Hospice Durham organization. When the Lieutenant Governor was in Durham on September 12, Mrs Putnam made a very respectful comment and gave a testimonial.

It would be remiss of me not to recognize that there are more people, far beyond the names I've mentioned. I apologize if I've in any way perhaps embarrassed people by mentioning those names. But recognition and thank you is what I'm trying to say. For that reason, I expect every member of this House to respond to Mr Wood's resolution today. Think of your own family, if you want to be selfish, but think of your community. We each have a responsibility and a role to make the last days of those in the later stages of life respectful, graceful and supportive.

1150

With regard to what the government has done, I have to recognize that the Honourable Cam Jackson is really trying to extend the whole initiative of long-term care. Many members would know that our initiatives are far-reaching. As we move people into the home, the home care component has to be there. Indeed, I'm familiar with his most recent announcement in July of some \$550.8 million that has been allocated to this very important home care support system. But the money is only one piece; the rest, respectfully, is volunteers. I'm saying thank you, and the best way for the members here to say thank you is to support Mr Wood's very important, very thoughtful and very compassionate resolution today. Thank you for your time.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I stand in support and would like to commend the member for London South for bringing this resolution forward. It certainly is a timely one in light of the situation that's taking place in Sudbury now, where the Sudbury Regional Palliative Care Association is saying they're going to have to close their doors on December 31 if the government doesn't fund them adequately.

I want to tell the member for London South, if in fact this task force is created, you would do well to learn from the Sudbury experience. We are very proud of our palliative care association and our palliative care service. It began in 1989 under the tutelage of Gerry Loughheed Jr, and might I suggest that both the Minister of Health and the Minister of Long-Term Care would be well advised to include and involve him in any process when we're talking about hospice palliative care initiatives. He definitely has the momentum, the opportunity to share knowledge and the expertise.

I would suggest to you as well that it is important that any palliative care association ensures that it reflects the needs of the community. We started our first team of volunteers in 1989. We implemented our francophone training in 1992, because we wanted to assure ourselves that the 35% of the population which is francophone within the regional municipality of Sudbury was well served by these

services as well. All our volunteers are trained and educated through and with the use of qualified trainers who donate their time. As of October 13 of this year, we have trained 461 volunteers in Sudbury.

We have supported over 1,330 families, because we believe the last stages of life are extremely important, and we believe it is essential and imperative that those people are reassured that their enthusiasm for life, although it may be shortened, is still appreciated and is still respected. These volunteers go out in the community and we service the people. In fact, over the course of the last little while there have been in excess of 12,000 volunteer hours during 1997 alone. Those aren't paid hours; this is volunteer service.

I suggest to you that the initiative of the member in bringing forth this resolution is well intentioned, but the good intentions of the member for London South must be accompanied by the commitment from the government to fully and adequately subsidize the funding of this type of service. It is imperative that the government commit additional resources, because in some cases the government is already donating. For example, in Sudbury they donate approximately \$27,000. That's woefully underfunded when in fact there has been the estimate that \$150,000 is necessary to continue the program.

It's essential that the service is provided in every community in Ontario. It's essential that you look at the Sudbury model, because they are well advanced from where this resolution is. It's an opportunity for the task force to shorten its mandate, provide the services and get the services into every community in Ontario.

At this time, the only caveat I would say to the government is that you have to make a commitment to your member for London South that you're going to put the appropriate dollars into palliative care services. Otherwise the exercise today, the exercise of the task force, will be fruitless and the reality will be that people in Ontario will consider this government, on an ongoing basis, as not caring about people.

The Acting Speaker: The member for London South, you have two minutes.

Mr Bob Wood: I'd like to express my thanks to all those who participated in the debate. I'd like to respond to a few of the concerns that have been raised.

The question has been raised as to why have a task force to deal with this. The answer to that I think is that it's a very complex issue and we need input and expertise to get it right. I might say that I share the concern that I know others have, that task forces sometimes sweep problems under the rug. That's they reason the resolution is so specific. If the resolution is adopted, we're going to see some action from what's there.

The issue has been raised that palliative care is going to cost money, and that of course is true. I suggest to you, it might not cost as much as some might think because such a large component is that of volunteers. I'd also point out to you that the program can be phased in over time, and in particular when the budget is balanced, I think there are going to be monies available. I suggest that after the

budget is balanced, one of the top priorities for use of the surplus should be hospice palliative care.

The question of raising profile came forward and I think that is absolutely correct. Every member of this House can help in bringing this issue to the forefront of the public agenda.

What palliative care hospices are really about is letting people achieve the kind of end they want. It can be a very positive experience and very much a part of life. It was not a positive experience for my grandmother some 38 years ago, but it was for my aunt three years ago. She was able to die in her own home and she said to me a few days before she died, "I hate to go because everyone's being so nice to me." The fact of the matter is, that was the right way to end a life well lived.

What we do today can be an important step forward and I do hope all members of the House will support this resolution.

HEALTH CARE ACCOUNTABILITY AND PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR L'OBLIGATION DE RENDRE DES COMPTES À L'ÉGARD DES SOINS DE SANTÉ ET SUR LA DÉCLARATION DES DROITS DES PATIENTS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will now deal with the first ballot item, number 25, standing in the name of Mrs Boyd.

Mrs Boyd has moved second reading of Bill 50, An Act to promote patients' rights and to increase accountability in Ontario's health care system.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 95(j), the bill is referred to the committee of the whole.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We ask for it to be referred to the social development committee.

The Acting Speaker: Majority in favour?

All those in favour, please stand.

All those opposed, please stand.

The majority is not in favour; therefore the bill is sent to the committee of the whole.

PALLIATIVE CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will now deal with ballot item number 26, standing in the name of Mr Wood.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

All matters related to private members' business have been debated. I will now leave the chair, and the House will resume at 1:30 of the clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1200 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): Two years ago, the former Minister of Transportation, Mr Palladini, agreed to install an advanced warning light at Balsam Street on the Thunder Bay Expressway. This came about as a result of strong lobbying from a variety of concerned groups, including the OPP and Thunder Bay city council, who were concerned about the number of vehicles that were running the red light at this particular intersection, sadly resulting in some tragic accidents and countless near misses.

Since its installation, there has been a major improvement at that intersection. However, it has become increasingly clear that these lights need to be in place throughout the expressway. This past summer, more accidents took place further down the system that were a direct result of vehicles not stopping at a red light. So for the sake of improved safety, I hope that Minister Clement will now listen and indeed act.

We all recognize that an advanced warning light is not the perfect solution to the problem. However, if we look at the experience of provinces such as Manitoba and British Columbia, where advanced warning lights are common, there already are some jurisdictions that believe they improve safety on the highways.

Minister, let me make a direct plea to you today. I recognize that your ministry installed the Balsam Street light as a three-year pilot project in order to gauge its effectiveness. Today I'm asking you to listen to the concerns of so many of my constituents and end the pilot project now. Surely two years is enough time to confirm that the advanced warning light has made a positive difference. Minister, surely you would agree that if this relatively inexpensive system can save one life, it will have been worth it. Show some flexibility. Do it now.

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) : Je veux attirer l'attention du ministre de l'Éducation de la province à une situation que je suis sûr qu'il connaît lui-même. Patrimoine Canada du gouvernement fédéral, comme on le sait, a pris la décision de ne plus verser de l'argent vers nos collèges communautaires francophones ici en Ontario. C'est une situation très sérieuse.

On sait qu'en 1993, le gouvernement de Bob Rae a négocié avec le gouvernement conservateur de la journée, de verser 173 \$ millions sur une période de cinq ans pour s'assurer qu'on a de l'argent en place pour être capable de financer nos collèges francophones ici dans la province de l'Ontario. Cet argent est utilisé pour développer des programmes dans le Collège Boréal, le Collège des Grands Lacs et autres. Et là on apprend que le gouvernement fédéral nous dit qu'ils ne vont plus verser de dollars du gouvernement fédéral de M. Jean Chrétien au gouverne-

ment provincial de l'Ontario, ni aux autres provinces à travers le Canada.

C'est sérieux parce que ceci veut dire que le gouvernement fédéral est en train de s'ôter de ses obligations quand ça vient à l'éducation postsecondaire en français de nos jeunes dans la province de l'Ontario. Je demande au ministre de l'Éducation de retourner à la table de négociations et de faire son devoir. Nous dans le Nouveau Parti démocratique sommes prêts à travailler avec lui pour nous assurer que le gouvernement libéral fédéral prend sa responsabilité et assure les dollars nécessaires pour financer notre système postsecondaire francophone, qu'on ait l'argent nécessaire pour fonctionner.

DIABETES

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): It gives me great pleasure to introduce some very special guests who are in the members' gallery today.

Ayden Byle of Inverhuron, Ontario, was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes six years ago. He must constantly monitor his blood sugar level and requires up to five shots of insulin per day.

There are more than 1.6 million diabetics living in Canada today. That is close to 6% of our total population. Most of us either have diabetics as members of our family or know someone who does. Most of us pay little attention to this disease. Diabetics appear to lead normal lives. Nothing could be further from the truth. Diabetes is a devastating disease which will eventually take its toll. It is no different from cancer, heart disease or kidney disease. There is no cure.

On June 1 of this year, Ayden left Vancouver to run across Canada to raise money for diabetes research. He has run over 4,500 kilometres to arrive in Toronto today. He has raised nearly \$90,000 and intends to reach Halifax by the end of November. Like Terry Fox, Ayden has suffered setbacks and disappointments during his run, but this young man's courage and determination is outstanding. The Canada Challenge slogan is "May We All Be Challenged." In keeping with this slogan, Ayden challenges all Canadians to support this cause.

I invite you to meet this outstanding young Ontarian, his team and his family in room 230 following question period today. I wish Ayden a safe and successful journey to the east coast. Good luck, Ayden. We look forward to your homecoming.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): I would like to comment on the Mike Harris plan to put money back into the pockets of Ontarians. When Mike Harris introduced the new value assessment system, he said it would be fair for everyone. Once again, Mike Harris has delivered a serious blow to low-income families in Ontario.

The new assessment system will have a negative effect for the Hawkesbury Housing Corp, which faces a 44% tax

increase. The business community in Glengarry, Prescott and Russell is faced with a property tax increase of up to 574%, and this will have a serious effect on employment in Glengarry, Prescott and Russell, all of which is the result of this Mike Harris government downloading.

DIABETES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I would like to welcome and congratulate Ayden Byle, who is here today, I understand, from Inverhuron, Ontario. He is about to run across the country — there he is again; we're very proud of you and welcome you here today — to raise money for diabetes research.

I want to take this opportunity to say that my son has juvenile diabetes. He was diagnosed at about the age of 11. I'm quite familiar now with the problems associated with this kind of disease and how very important it is to raise funds privately for research. That's why I'm so very pleased, as my son is, that you're doing this.

I do have to say, though, that governments too have to take responsibility and make sure that funding is there, particularly in areas of prevention and health promotion. I know that when my son was diagnosed as a boy, and into adulthood, it was very important to him to learn how to take care of himself.

I have to note today that the Tory government has cut funds to public health programs which include these programs for prevention and health promotion. I would implore the government today to put those funds back so we don't lose those really necessary health promotion programs.

HERITAGE FESTIVAL

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to recognize the Heritage Festival that took place last weekend in Port Hope. Port Hope is well known for its 19th century homes and streetscape, and last spring the downtown was officially designated as a heritage conservation district. One of the most recent heritage projects the town undertook was the restoration of the Capitol Theatre in downtown Port Hope.

This was the first year for the festival, and by all accounts it was a tremendous success, with many people coming from across Ontario, as well as the United States. Some of the events included live entertainment, horse-drawn carriage rides, historical walking tours, harvest food samplings, a native dance and powwow by the Alderville First Nations group, and tents featuring Canadian arts and crafts.

I applaud the founders of the festival, Gary and Judi McWilliams, and the other members of the festival committee who volunteered their time to showcase Port Hope. I'm pleased to say that the marketing of the Heritage Festival was supported by Ontario Tourism through the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

I would encourage all members of this House to visit historic Port Hope this fall, because there really is more to discover in Northumberland.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The state of health care in the Niagara region continues to deteriorate under the Mike Harris government. We have the hospital closing commission lurking around St Catharines and the Niagara Peninsula looking at closing hospitals or drastically altering the roles which our hospitals play.

We have hospitals in the area that have to carry huge deficits because of the cut in funding from the provincial government. We have people waiting for hip joint and knee joint operations and other operations of that kind. We have a need for nursing homes and increased funding for homes such as Linhaven so they can meet the needs of seniors in our area. I remind members of the Legislature that the Niagara region has per capita the largest number of senior citizens in the province.

We have emergency care which from time to time is not available because hospitals are on a bypass situation. Prescription drug costs are very onerous on many of the people who live in the Niagara region, and the senior citizens remember well the user fee which was slapped on them by the Mike Harris government.

We have a situation with Dr Beiko, an ophthalmologist, who has to turn away long-term patients simply because there isn't enough money to be able to carry out that particular responsibility.

Hospitals are discharging patients quicker and sicker at this time and what we require is a strong infusion of funds from the Ministry of Health of Ontario.

1340

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Last week I rose in my place and advised the government members of the rally I was attending at Allenby public school, where parents were outraged at the possibility of losing their community school as a result of this government's education agenda.

Last night I attended another such meeting at Central public school, again organized by the parent council. The meeting was chaired by Cathy Gazzola. Joining me at that meeting was our local school board member, trustee Judith Bishop, as well as local aldermen Andrea Horwath and Ron Corsini.

I want to emphasize the fact that at that meeting, the biggest issue at this point was the fact that these parents were not going to get a decent length of time to consider the important issues that ought to be considered. We have a process locally that provides for 18 months to allow parents and the community an opportunity to have input in these kinds of decisions. As a result of this government's agenda, those parents and our community are going to get

two weeks to consider up to 25 school closures. That is disgraceful.

It's your responsibility to allow democracy to take place and you're stifling it. This is not just a building game or a numbers game. We've got to be looking at the programs that are available, the child care programs that are there. Is this a community centre? What are the other uses for this place? More and more you're killing education.

APPLE FESTIVAL

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to share with my colleagues on the other side more good news about an event occurring in my riding of Durham East.

This Saturday, October 17, the Bowmanville Business Centre is hosting the annual Bowmanville apple festival and craft sale. This event runs from 9 am to 5 pm in the Victorian downtown of Bowmanville, thanks to the hard work of volunteers like Garth Gilpin and Ron Hooper and a number of other volunteers. I encourage all members to visit Bowmanville this Saturday.

The Applefest has an extensive and exciting schedule of events. There will be a variety of fresh apples available, as well as baked goods, freshly pressed apple cider, a pie eating contest and hot apple fritters. There will also be a huge tent filled with crafts and live entertainment, and even a professional lumberjack competition. What better way to spend an autumn weekend than in downtown Bowmanville?

The annual Applefest provides the opportunity to reflect on the importance of the apple industry in Durham. There are many top-quality apple producers in my riding, for instance, Kirk Kemp; Empire Orchards, owned and operated by Bob and Gail Simpson; and Nature's Bounty, owned by the McKay family. There is also Archibald's Orchards and Estate Winery, with their prize-winning selection of apple wine. Fred and Sandy Archibald have established a very successful new business that will be part of the tour.

Apple production is an important part of the agricultural sector, not only in my riding but indeed across the province, and I would encourage everyone to attend Applefest in Bowmanville this weekend.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to rise to ask for unanimous consent today for the following motion to be forwarded from this Legislative Assembly to Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and Finance Minister Paul Martin. The motion would read:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario demands that the federal Liberal government take advantage of this year's federal budget surplus to begin restoring to the provinces the more than \$6 billion it has cut from health care and education."

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): You are seeking unanimous consent to put the motion. Agreed? No.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: With high respect, would you convey the courtesy of a name? Who was it who said no?

The Speaker: I have no idea. I just heard a no.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Did it come from the Liberal caucus? Definitely that's where I heard it come from.

The Speaker: I have no idea where the no came from, none whatsoever. I heard a no.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Stop the clock. Member for York South.

Mr Kennedy: I anticipate why the government won't like this question. It has to do with their mismanagement of health care and specifically, Minister, your personal mismanagement of hospital emergency rooms in this province.

Minister, on your watch, hospital emergency rooms hit a crisis last February. At first, you said it was the flu. You said it was something that hospitals should deal with themselves. Not until your Premier had to go to an emergency room himself did you agree there was a problem. Then you tacked on a committee that the hospitals had already set up, and when that committee reported to you, you said on April 20 that you were acting immediately. You said, "Every region of the province will benefit from our immediate action on the task force's recommendations." We're sitting here six months later and you haven't done anything — not one of the things you said you would do.

What I want to know is, will you apologize today to the people of Ontario for having mismanaged the situation in the emergency rooms of the province?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I'm not sure if you were the one who just said no, that you were unwilling to support the NDP motion to get additional health funding from the federal government or not, but we did hear a no from the Liberal benches.

What I have always said is that our government, under the leadership of our Premier, has always indicated that health is a priority. We have said we would maintain health funding at \$17.4 billion. Not only have we maintained the funding, we have increased the funding by at least \$1.2 billion or \$1.3 billion.

Our government made the tough decisions to restructure health care. Our government acknowledged the fact that we needed to deal with the emergency room situation and we set up a task force.

As you and I know, these issues that arise in emergency rooms have been there for a long time. I can look at the list in front of me here —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

1350

Mr Kennedy: Minister, what you're saying verges on absolute neglect. For you not to have read page 1 of the report you've been trying to hide behind — on page 1 of this report, written by doctors and hospital administrators, it says, "The emergency room problems in Toronto began in October 1996," when you were the government. That's what it says. Further, this report says you are to act within 90 days. It gave you 90 days. Today, six months later, you've done nothing.

Donna Kline at Sunnybrook says there are staffing shortages, a high volume of patients, the beds are full and, as a result of those bed shortages, they can't serve people. In North York General, Donna Bloomfield is telling us that because of the lack of funding both for the services in their hospitals and for home care they can't discharge people, because you haven't done what you've promised.

Minister, when are you going to make things safe for patients in Toronto? All of these hospitals understand it is your fault. Will you act?

Hon Mrs Witmer: To the member opposite, if you had had the courage when you were in government to move forward rather than neglecting our health system and not having the courage, we wouldn't have had situations such as you had when it was under your watch, where it says in the *Ottawa Citizen*, December 26, 1987, "An elderly woman turned away from two area hospitals last weekend died Christmas day," and I could go on and on. These are the situations that we had the courage to correct. We had the courage to set up a committee with the Ontario Hospital Association. The report was issued, we accepted the recommendations and we will be implementing those recommendations to improve health care in this province.

Mr Kennedy: Hiding behind the tiny shreds of credibility you have, you have to answer this question today. On April 20 you promised 1,700 short-term long-term-care beds to alleviate the emergency situation. When are you funding them? Six months later you haven't. That's almost criminal, Minister. You promised temporary beds for flexibility in emergency rooms. You said in your release you would act immediately. You've done nothing about it. You said you would provide capital to emergency rooms. You announced \$3.2 million for the emergency room in Windsor and you gave them nothing. You said you'd put extra money into home care and you've done nothing.

Minister, today I want you to stand in the House and tell us exactly why there has been a delay in the money you personally specifically promised us on April 20. Is it politics? Are you waiting to get more benefit in the election? Or is just incompetence?

Hon Mrs Witmer: To the member opposite, I would encourage you to check the facts that you've just presented. As you know, the Minister of Long-Term Care has certainly been making additional money available in the

area of home care services. We also have dealt with the situation in Windsor, and I'm very pleased to say that we are making long-term-care beds available. Unfortunately, it's as a result of the lack of planning that was developed under your government that we saw no long-term-care beds awarded for over 10 years, so we're now in a position where we're finally doing what your government should have done, and the government after you.

The Speaker: New question.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I would go back to the other minister, but she talks about courage and she's avoiding the questions. I have to direct my question to the new minister for half of health care, for long-term care.

Minister, I want to refer you to the remarks of your colleague, who says there's lots of home care available. Toronto home care tells us they have a \$12-million deficit coming at them this year. That is your specific responsibility. It is one of the reasons your other minister has not been able to provide service. She's not taking care of her end, but you're not taking care of yours.

I specifically want to refer you to Kingston, where they are facing a \$1-million deficit. They've had a 15% to 20% increase in patients coming in. They are now cutting services to patients. I want to know, Minister, do you approve of cutting services to patients, why are you permitting it to happen and why won't you provide home care funding to offset the cuts to hospitals that the Minister of Health has made?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Long-Term Care, minister responsible for seniors): I want to thank the member for his question and I want to set the record straight, because he certainly still hasn't got the proper picture as it relates to home care right here in the city of Toronto. I want to advise the member opposite that before even one hospital has closed in this city, we have flowed, in Toronto alone, \$25 million of new dollars in less than two years to the Toronto CCAC. Their budget is now over \$60 million.

If you want to ask questions about why there is inequity, you look to your colleague sitting to your immediate right. He represents constituents in Scarborough, and in Scarborough for years, for over a decade, they have been receiving half the levels of care that your constituents were receiving in York. Your government lacked the courage to do anything about it and the subsequent government lacked the courage to do it. This government has the courage to have an equity model so that these dollars are shared equally for all the citizens of Ontario.

Mr Kennedy: The Bobbsey Twins of health care in this government are obviously the twins of no accountability. They are bobbing patients back and forth and nobody will take responsibility. They've already cut \$266 million more in Toronto than they've put back in and they've cut millions more in Kingston as well. Minister, I want to see if somehow you will stand up and be accountable, as your colleague will not.

I want to ask you if you would be accountable to Joan Rose. Joan Rose has MS. She has limited use of her hands and no use of her feet. She was getting home care for an hour and a half a week to clean. She's in a wheelchair. She doesn't have the ability to clean her floors or to do her housekeeping. She has been cut back to an hour and a half a week and now she has been cut off entirely in Kingston. As well, there's Joan Paley who is 77 years old. Her husband is 85 years old. He has cancer. He is cooking for her. He is providing the care. They were cut back. They had four hours a week for home care and personal care. Minister, will you restore the cuts you made to both Joan Paley and Joan Rose?

Hon Mr Jackson: It's important that the member opposite realize that these programs are managed by locally elected boards and the decisions made in the Kingston area have been made by the residents of Kingston. Kingston has enjoyed a very fortunate situation in this province in that they are receiving far and above the provincial average of additional home care dollars to spend on the residents of their community.

Your colleague who sits in your caucus has been advised and has raised this question before. But there are other colleagues of yours in this House who are receiving half the levels of care that they are receiving in the city of Kingston. So the community care access centre in Kingston is managing from the increased growth dollars that they will receive over the course of the next eight years, managed care, incremental changes, meeting the growing number of seniors in those communities.

We've had a situation where parts of this province — your colleague from Renfrew, his seniors were receiving four times more service than your colleague from St Catharines. We've put an end to that and we're making sure it doesn't matter what city you live in, you're entitled to the base amount of care in this province and you will receive it.

Mr Kennedy: Sadly, what that means is you're not entitled to health care, you're entitled to Elizabeth Witmer care or Cam Jackson care, which is indifferent care. Joan Paley, 77 years old, seven spinal surgeries, doesn't get home care any more because of you, Minister. The person running home care in Kingston has this to say to you. She says: "We're talking about needed services. We've already sorted out the people who didn't need it. That's the hardship." It's in their power, in practical terms, to provide and meet that need, but not in financial terms.

You've cut \$38 million more out of Kingston than you put back in. Your government has done that. You've cut millions more out of Toronto. You've created the crisis in emergency rooms. Will you stand up today and tell us that you're prepared to do one simple thing: that for every bed you've cut, for every nurse you've fired in the hospitals you're going to put the exact same amount of money back into those communities, you're going to make sure that Joan Paley and Joan Rose, two elderly people whom you've taken care away from will get their care back? Minister, I dare you, answer the question.

Hon Mr Jackson: I'm going to clarify what the member opposite has been trying to argue, that there has not been an increase in home care spending in this province. I'm going to argue with this minister until he gets it right.

Interjection: The member.

Hon Mr Jackson: The member. I remember when he actually was a minister. It's just that he shows up with his collar on most days.

My point to the member opposite is simply this: This province has increased the amount of funding for health care and you've denied that at every single turn. This province has increased by 40% the amount of dollars going to community-based care. We're providing two thirds of all the public financing in this great country for one third of Canada's seniors. It's a record we're proud of, and you still don't get it.

1400

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is for the Minister of Health. Today, as you may know, the member for London South, one of your own government members, had a resolution debated here which met with all-party acceptance on the idea that you establish a task force on palliative care. Of course the implication was that your government somehow believed that you somehow believed that you would support better services for palliative care patients.

The reality is you're overseeing the destruction of quality services for dying patients. There are lots of patients in this province who want to die at home but can't because there isn't enough care available, at least two cases in Renfrew county, for example, where patients died of cancer but couldn't die at home, because the total number of hours of care allocated to them had run out before their deaths occurred.

When will you take responsibility for the health care system in this province, and when will you provide adequate funding to deal with palliative care patients?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I'll refer that to the minister responsible, the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Long-Term Care, minister responsible for seniors): First of all, I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I know of her interest in palliative care services, and I know that when she was in government, her government began one of the first programs. It was about \$2 million to begin several of these programs.

I'm pleased to report that today in Ontario we're spending three to four times that amount of money, that we have expanded these programs into virtually every corner of our province. There are now 54 of these programs operating. The challenge we have had is to make the transition from hospital-directed service to community-based care. If there is any message I have clearly articulated to the community care access centres in this province, it's how they bundle these services in a more sensitive fashion

to ensure that these respite, homemaking and nursing services can be utilized in a palliative fashion. We have encouraged that. I have announced —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mrs Boyd: Minister, the whole issue has been brought to the attention of the Minister of Health, and since you were appointed in a division of the services in the health system, to you. The Ontario Nurses' Association has made it very clear to you that those who are delivering care in the home are finding case after case after case where people don't happen to die within the budget, and so they're left without care. It's disgraceful. You say you're trying to make the CCACs more sensitive. How can they be more sensitive when your own guidelines for access to service say it should depend on the acuity of the services? This is absolutely a sleight of hand. It's unconscionable that you are presiding over this and then pretending, through the member for London South, that your government cares about people who are dying in this province. It's nonsense.

When are you going to stop this situation and actually put the dollars you've announced into the CCAC system?

Hon Mr Jackson: First of all, the member is trying to make this into some sort of political bunfight, and I want to advise the member opposite that what has failed here in this province is that we have never had a government with the courage to look at why the hospital sector would say that they and they alone should manage palliative care when in fact we are building a community-based system through the CCACs, some of which in this province don't quite get it, that they are supposed to integrate these palliative care services.

I have a situation today in Sudbury where this level of co-operation isn't going. They want to build their own separate silo instead of dealing with an integrated system. We need to bring the hospital sector, the nurses, to the table. We need to put not-for-profit agencies at the table and provide them with the seed money to allow those programs to go. But we're not going to build separate stand-alone structures the way we built hospitals a century ago, and we're now finally getting a community-based model to provide these services. By every benchmark there has been improvement. We have expanded the number of programs in the province, and we have seeded them with far more money —

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mrs Boyd: This is the height of hypocrisy. You have blamed the problem for the shortfall of services on the people who are receiving services. You were reported to have said some people are receiving too many services. That's what you just said about Renfrew county, that they were receiving too many services, and two people have now died without care because of your position.

This is the epitome of the Americanization of our system. This is what we hear from the United States: HMOs not delivering services because people are no longer insured, insurance companies refusing service because people have outlived their benefits. The minister has said all sorts of things about what he's promising to

do, but people are dying without services. Duncan Sinclair, on October 9, said, "A variety of services now are much more readily available to those who can afford to pay for them privately." If a person in Ontario can't afford to die in dignity, whose responsibility is it?

Hon Mr Jackson: This government has expanded the amount of support service that it has provided in community settings on just about every single front. We have expanded palliative care dollars in this province. In your own community of London, we have an outstanding program that we continue to assist, in partnering with paying for that program.

Frankly, I might accept your indignation about your own community, but we have actually transferred over a 13% increase for community-based care in your own community. You weren't shy about showing up for a photo when I presented the cheque to your own community.

Mrs Boyd: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I wasn't present when you delivered the cheque, and that is a personal affront. I want you to call the member to order.

The Speaker: It's not a point of order.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: The Sudbury Regional Palliative Care Association is anything but a stand-alone association. The Sudbury Regional Palliative Care Association involves everyone in the community, and for the minister to say it's a stand-alone association is wrong.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister, will you come to order, please.

We're now at the second question for the third party. Member for London Centre.

Mrs Boyd: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and my apologies, because obviously when the minister makes personal comments about a member of this House and personal comments towards people —

The Speaker: Same minister?

Mrs Boyd: It's a continuation — personal comments about the palliative care association in Sudbury, someone has to defend them.

This minister keeps talking about what has been announced, just like the Minister of Health. Everything gets announced; nothing gets spent. He talks about announcing \$82 million this fiscal year, and what assurance do we have that's going to translate into care for patients? There are patients all over this province who are losing services from the community care access centres, services they need to live independently and with dignity to death in their communities, and this minister talks about spreading the dollars around. He talks about bringing everything to the lowest common denominator instead of the highest common denominator. In Kingston 2,000 people have been cut off home care as a result of his changes.

This document about who has prioritization for access only talks about acuity. We're talking about triage here, we're not talking about home care, and you're not putting enough resources into it to make home care a reality.

Minister, when are you going to take your responsibility? When are you going to realize that your policies are —

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Jackson: I fail to see how, when in three short years we can go from \$700 million to \$1.2 billion in funding for the long-term-care envelope in this province, you indicate that is shirking the responsibility, to put that additional money in. Those monies have been spent.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Jackson: If you're not prepared to listen to these increases in health care spending in communities, there's nothing I can do to help you if you don't understand the facts as they are. If you're prepared to deny that the London CCAC has received a 13% increase, which they have, or that Toronto has received a 70% increase in three years, there's nothing I can do about that. But these are the facts.

1410

What I'm trying to get across to you is that the old, traditional means of delivering health service in this province has got to change. We are moving to a more community-based model, and therefore we are putting those resources in the hands of thousands of agencies that receive those dollars to develop their palliative care programs. They're not all hospital-based programs any more in this province.

Mrs Boyd: I did not suggest they were all hospital-based programs. But the community care access centres are being asked to take care of the people who are being released from hospitals because of the \$1 billion the Minister of Health has taken out of hospitals. They're all flooding into home care, and the people who are already there requiring care aren't getting it any more. That's the point.

You say you've announced an \$82-million increase in home care. With a 25% to 30% increase in the load for all the CCACs, that money should be at least \$250 million to just make up the difference.

You can keep on trying to defend what you're doing, but in the meantime, in every single community in this province, people are dying at home without care because of your policies. It's on your head that's happening. This should not be happening in this province.

Minister, make all the excuses you like, do all the wonderful public relations you like — you have a great facility for getting your picture taken; cameras are everywhere you go — go to the bedside of people who are dying as a result of your policies. Minister, what are you going to do?

Hon Mr Jackson: It's unfair when the member opposite is going to continually argue that all this money has left the health care system when in fact we have increased the amount going into health care by over \$1.4 billion. She still to this day refuses to acknowledge that.

Secondly, she refuses to acknowledge that we are one of only two provinces in this entire Dominion that provides its home care on a universal basis. In the Liberal and NDP provinces — every Liberal and NDP province in this country — they're charging a user fee, using a means test, an asset test or an income test, but not in Ontario and Manitoba. That's the quality of the system we've built and

are continuing to build in this province for our seniors and our disabled.

Mrs Boyd: The minister's answer is balderdash, because the reality is that people in Ontario don't get the services unless they pay for them privately. You say they get the services; we can show you thousands of cases where they don't.

The College of Family Physicians of Canada held a press conference to make this point: that 69% of physicians in Canada — large numbers of them in Ontario — say their patients are adversely affected because of inadequate or delayed access to home care.

We're supposed to believe the gospel according to Cam Jackson; we're not supposed to believe the Ontario Nurses' Association, we're not supposed to believe Duncan Sinclair, the commissioner you put in charge of hospital destruction, and we're not supposed to believe the College of Family Physicians of Canada. In spite of all the facts that are adduced, in spite of all the statistics, in spite of all the personal stories, we're supposed to believe you when you stand up and say, "Hey, we're doing everything just right."

It's absolute nonsense, Minister, and it's time for you to assume your responsibility. Will you protect patients in Ontario and our health care system by moving forward on standards for home care?

Hon Mr Jackson: The member refers to this press conference today by the College of Family Physicians of Canada from across our country. The member should be very much aware of the fact that their concerns were based on the problems that are being experienced in other provinces primarily. You know that, and you should have shared that with this House. In fact, the media's main concern was why the Liberal government in Ottawa, when faced with a \$12-billion fiscal dividend, cannot find a single penny for health care services that they've cut across this country and cut in this province by \$2.4 billion.

In NDP Saskatchewan, you can't even get most of the services that are provided here in Ontario. In Saskatchewan, you have to open your wallet to get home care; you don't have to do that here in this province.

TUITION FEES

Mr David Caplan (Oriole): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. All members of this House are quite aware of your government's assault on the students of Ontario. We've seen skyrocketing tuition fees; we've seen student debts increase even further with your changes to OSAP. As a rationale for your decision to deregulate fees and to increase tuitions even further, you said that all institutions are required to file a quality improvement plan. That's what I'd like to ask you about specifically here today.

Your ministry's memo of May 6 indicates that all institutions are required to prepare these so-called plans. A letter went out on July 31 telling the universities that these plans had to be submitted to your ministry. My question is very simple: How many plans have you received, how

many have you approved and signed off on and how many have you sent back for further work to protect the quality of our students' education?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for Oriole for raising this topic, because it is a most important one. A number of the quality assurance plans are coming in. I'm delighted to see them coming in. The ministry is reviewing them. They are very important to the post-secondary students, because the post-secondary students are concerned about the quality of their education, and they want to see the monies invested in ways and means that can improve the quality of their education.

We indicated that if the post-secondary institutions were to raise the tuition fees, 30% of that would have to go to assist students, and indeed there would also have to be a quality assurance plan to indicate how the monies were being reinvested from any tuition increase, if the institution decided to increase tuitions, how they were investing that in quality. Those plans are coming in, and the ministry is reviewing them.

Mr Caplan: It's not surprising that the minister doesn't have a direct answer. They're coming in; he hasn't reviewed them. He has taken a hands-off approach to the students of Ontario.

The memo from Mr Trick, your ADM, says that a penalty in the form of government operating grant reductions will be applied to any university that does not comply with this tuition fee policy. But who would pay the price for that operating grant reduction? It would be the students, obviously, in the form of even higher tuitions, in the form of even greater increased student debt. These students of Ontario have already paid higher tuitions, so when you deduct operating funds, students will have to make up for it with either even higher fees or quality decreases to their programs.

I am very concerned, Minister. You have these plans. You haven't looked at them. Why don't you just admit that this whole exercise is a farce? It's simply your way of turning a blind eye to the crisis you've created for our students.

I'm going to ask you again, Minister: Will you personally commit to reviewing these plans, and will you further commit that if the plans are not met, you will —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Minister of Education.

Hon David Johnson: I can assure the member opposite that I will personally be involved in these plans, because I consider these plans to be most important. This government considers quality in post-secondary education, indeed quality in education at all levels, to be of highest importance in terms of priorities for this government. I want to ensure that the quality is high. I want to ensure that there are assistance programs to help the students, the kinds of programs that we've announced recently, such as the Ontario student opportunity trust fund, some \$600 million worth of support to our students, the first time ever any government has instituted such a program,

the access to opportunities program, a \$150-million investment in the high-tech industry —

The Speaker: Answer.

Hon David Johnson: — and \$29 million to other universities. I'm proud to say that the quality is improving, and indeed the participation rate at the post-secondary level —

The Speaker: New question, third party.

1420

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Minister of Education and Training. Minister, I want to read to you from a memo that was sent last month to the chief caretakers in all Toronto public schools. It was sent by the superintendent of plant and operations and it says:

"Be advised that due to funding concerns, no exterior window cleaning will be carried out by contractors this school year."

Minister, your funding formula is causing dramatic cuts to school maintenance and school cleaning budgets. Do you now believe that clean windows are unnecessary in Ontario schools?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): Obviously, I didn't write that letter. The letter was written by an employee, I gather, of the Toronto school board.

This government considers the maintenance, the upkeep of our schools in the province of Ontario to be of highest importance. That's why we've allocated, through the fair funding formula monies, which in total — I will say that the total amount of dollars available is within 2% of the monies available in 1997. We've allocated those monies on a fair and equitable basis across Ontario so each and every school board will have monies to allocate to each and every school for a good level of maintenance, including cleaning of windows, running the schools, cleaning the hallways etc. We consider that to be of highest importance.

Mr Hampton: I heard the real answer from the Minister of Community and Social Services. She said kids will have to choose between clean windows and new textbooks. I would suggest to the government that people are going to choose between your income tax scheme and adequately funding education, and it's education they want.

Minister, the reality that's happening out there is that your school funding formula not only drives the closure of schools, it also drives schools to have to cut their budgets for cleaning and for school safety. For example, the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board in Kenora has had to lay off maintenance workers, janitors and custodial staff. The Halton and Peel boards, which have literally hundreds of mouldy portables to deal with, appealed to you and said, "Help us clean up these portables." You said, "No, use your cleaning budget." If they're going to clean up the mouldy portables, the school classrooms otherwise don't get cleaned.

Minister, the question is this: Will you change your funding formula so that school boards can adequately claim the space that they have and so that students —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister.

Hon David Johnson: The member opposite may be interested to know that the amount of money, \$5.20 per square foot, which has been allocated for operations and maintenance, is actually more than half the boards in the province required in 1997. So for about half of the boards in Ontario there is actually an increase in terms of the basic operations and maintenance budget.

What we're asking the remainder of the boards is, if half of the boards can operation within the \$5.20, and indeed are operating at a lower amount than that, why can't the other half? Why can't they have the same kind of practices that result in the same clean, safe schools that half the boards in the province of Ontario have already pursued?

We've allocated this money on a fair and equal basis. It's almost the same amount of money as last year. I believe that the boards can operate their schools very well within those parameters.

ONTARIO HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. I've received numerous calls and letters from constituents concerning a piece of property in Aurora which is under the trust of the Ontario Heritage Foundation. This property was gifted as an unconditional gift to the Ontario Heritage Foundation by the late Mrs Anne Bartley Smith. Mrs Smith was a devoted environmentalist who spent considerable years reforesting this property. There are now issues around this property over concerns that the Ontario Heritage Foundation is proposing to dispose of a portion of this property to a developer.

Minister, can you explain to this House and to the people of Ontario what the role of the Ontario Heritage Foundation is relative to gifts such as this, and particularly what responsibility the foundation has to ensure that the public interest is served in these matters?

Hon Isabel Bassett (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I want to thank the member for York-Mackenzie for his question and for bringing this important issue to my attention. As you know, I can't speak specifically about this property because the Ontario Heritage Foundation is an arm's-length agency of the government, but I do understand that discussions have been ongoing between the executors of the estate and the Ontario Heritage Foundation since 1992.

The Ontario Heritage Foundation's mandate is to identify, protect and preserve Ontario's natural and cultural heritage, and it's for the benefit of future and present-day Ontarians, so when a property such as this is bequeathed to the Ontario Heritage Foundation, the board and staff work with the estate representatives to ensure that all and any action the Ontario Heritage Foundation takes

involving the property is consistent with the spirit and intent of the benefactor's wishes.

Mr Klees: That's our concern particularly, that the Ontario Heritage Foundation takes no action with regard to disposition of any portion of this property until all parties are assured that the intent, the spirit in which that property was bequeathed is recognized and honoured. Can you give me an assurance that that in fact will take place?

Hon Ms Bassett: Again, I'm grateful that the member is so concerned about this issue. I have to say that I can't comment on this specific issue, but you understand that the Ontario Heritage Foundation has a board and a chair and a staff in whom I hold utmost confidence. It is an arm's-length agency and it will dispose of the matter as it sees fit.

I ask the member for York-Mackenzie to keep me apprised of what's occurring so that the people of Aurora and all Ontarians will benefit from his concern and from what the OHF is going to continue to do.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. You will recall last week I asked you questions about the situation in Ottawa concerning the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic school board and their enormous pupil space problems. Your colleagues John Baird from Nepean and Norm Sterling from Carleton, along with myself and a few other members, attended a meeting of parents from that board — 500 to be exact — and I'm sure they communicated to you how angry these parents were.

They were angry with the formula that they don't understand. I don't know who does. They were angry with the school closures that are recommended. They were angry with the portables that they have to put up with for 25% of their population. They were angry with the time frame. I'm sure you're hearing from many of your colleagues about the unfairness of this particular formula. Will you review the formula and will you consider the time frames as well?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): We have simply indicated to boards that if they wish to adjust their inventory by the end of the year in terms of having access to new pupil places, then we will certainly accept, at the end of the year, any adjustments they're prepared to make. If they don't wish to submit any further information by the end of the year, they're under no compulsion to do so.

Here in Toronto, for example, the Toronto board may decide not to do that and may decide to sell empty schools. They have some 80 schools here in Toronto they no longer use for public school purposes. They may decide to sell those schools, use the revenue and build new schools or new additions from that revenue. Perhaps the same might happen in Ottawa.

The whole formula is designed to create new accommodation in areas where there is the greatest need. In Durham, for example, the Durham board has announced

12 new schools and 11 major additions through the region of Durham. Here in Toronto, the Toronto Catholic board has suggested it will have six new schools as a result of the formula. We estimate about 200 new schools over the next three years through this formula.

Mr Patten: You talk about Durham, you talk about Toronto, you talk about everywhere else.

Last Friday, I went to a school and I asked the principal if I could see his floor plan and we went through each floor of that particular school. The ministry says there are 559 spaces for this particular school. We looked at every conceivable space that could be utilized or converted into classrooms. We could only arrive at 530, still short of what the ministry's formula says.

1430

If we did that, here's what this school would lose. It's an inner-city school; 70% of its children are immigrant children. They would lose special education assessment space, language development assessment space, breakfast and lunchroom with food preparation for 70 children, a clothing exchange for low-income children, a computer lab, ESL space for recently immigrated children, the staff room and a resource room with a computer for children with special learning difficulties.

Minister, come with me or ask some person from your ministry to come with me into my community and look at the application of this particular formula, because it is causing chaos and hurting and not achieving your objective.

Hon David Johnson: If there has been a mistake made in any particular board or any particular school in Ottawa or anywhere else in Ontario with regard to the number of spaces to a particular board or to a particular school, the ministry would be more than happy to be involved in correcting that situation. These spaces were developed in conjunction with a committee of board officials from across Ontario, from small boards, large boards etc. But I wouldn't stand here and tell you that the committee or the Ministry of Education is perfect in terms of assigning the number of spaces to any particular school.

So, number one, let me make clear that we would be happy to correct any mistakes if they've been made. Number two, though, it's up to the boards, within the framework of the money we're flowing to them, to make decisions. The Ministry of Education is not requiring any board to work at any level or any schools to be closed. We're simply providing a fair level of money for the operations of the schools and then the boards make the decisions as to how they apply that money.

GAMING REVENUE

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. Minister, Ontario charities have worked hard to become self-sufficient. In fact, they practise what your government only preaches. They've searched for ways to become self-supporting and they've been creative. When you shut down Monte Carlo events, they tried to work with your

government to develop an alternative that would work. But your government bungled the charity casino initiative and all we're left with now is a hell of a mess.

You promised charities \$40 million in interim funding, and so far they've seen not one penny of that money. With your government, it always seems to be, "The cheque is in the mail." They never see the money. They're asking, "Show us the money." When are charities going to see the money you promised?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): As the member knows, or should know, my counterpart from culture announced today \$100 million for Trillium. That's 10 times more money province-wide than was received under the old, flawed Monte Carlo system, which the police asked to be changed, which the charities themselves asked to be changed and which was difficult to regulate and control.

As far as the advance funds of \$40 million are concerned, that goes through the municipality so they can make decisions based on local needs and local priorities. That money started to flow last week. You should know that; if you don't, I can get you the details on it. Some areas have received the money.

The problem with the process is that it had to be applied for. It went through the municipalities, and as soon as we got the application, the money went back out to them.

As far as Charities First Ontario and other charities are concerned, they're ecstatic with this news. They think it's about time that the government had vision to strengthen communities and to give this kind of money to help families in need.

Mr Lessard: Minister, you've left charities out in the cold, and it's the communities they serve that are beginning to suffer. Charities live in fear that they won't be able to scrape together the funds they need to survive. They've seen the mess you've made of the charity casino initiative, and they're afraid you're planning to do the same thing with charity bingos.

Bingos raise in excess of \$40 million in the Windsor community alone. For many charities, it's their single largest source of income. They're beginning to see a pattern here of increased involvement by the Ontario Lottery Corp in the charitable gaming sector. They're beginning to see the big hand of your government going deeper into the pockets of charities, of hall owners, of suppliers.

Minister, I'm asking you today, under the G for "guarantee," will you guarantee that charities are not going to lose the right to manage and conduct charity bingos?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I don't know how they twist these things around. I don't know what he's talking about in terms of the bingo, but I can tell you that charities are ecstatic this government has had the courage to guarantee, under the G, guarantee \$100 million for charities across this province. That is a dramatic step forward.

I know your party supported the Monte Carlos. You participated in licensing 15,000 days of that type of

gambling activity that took place in this province. Only about \$6 million to \$10 million went directly to charities. The charities themselves had concerns about it. They've said to our government, "Thank goodness we've had a government take leadership in this role." There's my colleague Isabel Bassett's announcement today plus our earlier announcement of \$40 million in advance funding that goes through municipalities that know the local needs and can work with the charities. The charities I've talked to are absolutely ecstatic about that and they didn't like your old flawed system of the roving Monte Carlos.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Gary Fox (Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. We know that a number of municipalities in Ontario have gone through restructuring to find better and more efficient ways to serve taxpayers. Can you provide us with an update on municipal restructuring across the province, and can you tell us what the government has done to support these important reforms?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member for Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings for that very excellent question. As he knows, the municipalities are finding that restructuring leads to lower costs and gets rid of duplication and red tape, and that's the main reason most municipalities undertook it. As a matter of fact, there have been 85 restructuring proposals approved by this government to date. That affects and reduces the number of municipalities in Ontario from 815 down to 593. Another piece of important news for municipalities is that it also reduces the number of municipal councillors by more than 1,000, which is probably good news for everybody.

We also recognize that there is a lot required in restructuring and this government has been there to help municipalities in every way we possibly can. We know there are upfront costs involved. We have been there to provide more than \$70 million to help municipalities restructure, to enable them to integrate their computer systems, for example, to help them with front-end costs that are necessary when they're giving out early retirement packages and so forth.

Mr Fox: Can you provide some examples of what municipalities have achieved through restructuring? I understand more municipalities are looking at restructuring to achieve cost savings and efficiencies. Can you also tell us about further restructuring initiatives underway and what your ministry is doing to encourage these?

Hon Mr Leach: In the member's own municipality, in Prince Edward county, 11 municipalities were amalgamated into one. In Peterborough the number of municipalities went from 19 to 10. In Wellington county 21 municipalities restructured into nine. In Chatham-Kent, the poster boy of restructuring has gone from 23 municipalities to a single municipality. In Chatham-Kent, for example, the year's budget of those 23 municipalities down to one municipality has shown a savings in excess of

\$5 million. As a matter of fact, just the consolidating of their banking services in Chatham-Kent saved that municipality in excess of \$400,000.

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MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a question to the Minister of Health. Your ministry has saved \$2.6 million by closing psychiatric beds in Ontario and you promised that this money would be applied to after-care services for psychiatric patients of whom there are, as you know, literally hundreds wandering the streets aimlessly without hope or support.

Let me give you an example of what happens when you don't apply this money to after-care. Toronto police 14 division receives 258 phone calls a month for help from the Queen Street psychiatric centre and hundreds of calls from other centres regarding patients in trouble. If a patient forgets his medication or falls on the sidewalk and can't breathe, we're dispatching three services: the fire department, ambulance and the police.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question?

Mr Ruprecht: If a person throws himself in front of a streetcar, we do the same thing. I'd like to know from this minister, as you know there's evidence of a crisis here: When will you treat this as a priority and not use up police —

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): This is a priority. If you recall, this past year the parliamentary assistant for health, Mr Newman, did a thorough consultation on mental health services in Ontario. There was a tremendous response from all the stakeholders. The result was that they indicated the strategy that had been developed by the previous government needed change. They made recommendations. As a result of their request, we have already this year made available \$60 million in additional funding to support community services. We have set up a court diversion program —

The Speaker: Answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: — to assist those individuals who don't need to go through the normal court system. We have community treatment teams to provide 24-hour support to those —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Ruprecht: I'm delighted to hear there's a strategy, because when you walk down here or on Queen Street you'll find hundreds of people walking about. That certainly is a very shocking dilemma that you have to face.

I just want to point out one thing, and that is, don't use our police as babysitters for psychiatric services. They have other responsibilities as well. You're not saving any money at all. If you don't save money, why don't you put this money into after-care, where it belongs? You will remember that we have in the west end of Toronto hundreds of halfway houses, crisis care facilities and institutions of that nature, yet what's happening? They're all full. If you have a strategy and all these places are full,

then we are asking you today to make a commitment: Spend the money for crisis care facilities and for homes, because otherwise the problem ends up right in your face and right on our doorsteps. I'm asking you today, get up here and tell us what you're going to do. Forget this strategy you have, because it's not working. We want you to spend some money for additional housing.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Those are the very issues we are well aware of. In fact, that's why we set up the consultation and that's why Mr Newman spoke to all the stakeholders. That's why we invested in community support services, the \$60 million. These are exactly the issues that need to be addressed. That's why we are very pleased that we have made this investment, that we are moving forward. As you know, it was our government that put the moratorium on the closing of the psychiatric beds until the community services were there. This year we continue to move forward. We know that at the present time we are providing more service than ever before to those who are seriously mentally ill as a result of the fact that there are the community assertive teams out there, that there is the court diversion program, that there is more money for community support services, and yes, the housing is a critical component of this as well.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH OFFICE

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Health as well. You have a letter on your desk from the mayor of Sault Ste Marie asking you to locate the new regional health office for northern Ontario in Sault Ste Marie. Will you do that? Will you tell us here today that you will recognize the central location of Sault Ste Marie and the very real unemployment challenge, some 18%, that we are facing, and the number of jobs we have lost through government downsizing and tell the mayor that we will be getting this very important office?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Certainly I am familiar with the issue in this instance and other instances. Obviously when these decisions are made there are many factors that are taken into consideration. Based on the recommendations from staff, there will be a location designated. I'm sure your community is being given the same consideration as the others.

Mr Martin: The mayor, in his letter, expresses his frustration with the process you refer to and the fact that he and other officials from our community attended a meeting with people from your ministry and got the very real impression that a decision had already been made. As a matter of fact he says in his letter, "The thrust of the meeting was that Sudbury was to be the focal point of northern Ontario and Sault Ste Marie could euphemistically be deemed a satellite."

Are you going to turn Sault Ste Marie into a satellite? Sault Ste Marie is a regional centre that has watched its ability to act as such seriously slashed over the last three years. Will you reverse this trend and, for all the right reasons, agree to locate this office in Sault Ste Marie?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I certainly appreciate the member's support for his own community and the case he does make. Let me assure you that all the sites are currently being considered. There are other communities that are lobbying equally hard, and no final announcement has yet been made.

TRAFFIC CONTROL

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. I am looking for your help in solving a problem in my riding of High Park-Swansea involving truckers who break the law by driving on neighbourhood streets during hours of prohibition. While I acknowledge that police enforcement is a municipal responsibility, as is adequate signage to alert and warn truckers of the 7 pm to 7 am prohibition, truckers who break the bylaw currently face only a minimum fine, which they tend to see as a cost of doing business.

What can the Ministry of Transportation do to help my constituents with this problem and to help give the residents the peace and quiet they have the right to expect and which the city bylaw assumes they will receive? Will you at least consider the quadrupling of fines?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): I'd like to thank the honourable member for his question. I am very well familiar with the stretch of road to which he refers. It is a very busy municipal road, and with the construction of the Humber bridge and other improvements in the area, there have been a number of traffic jams as motorists try to get to the QEW or en route from the QEW to the 427 or 401. Some of that traffic is trucks that are looking for alternative routes, and they may have chosen Parkside Drive.

But that doesn't mean they can ignore posted signs, so I have been working with the Ontario Trucking Association and in fact have contacted them about this and many other streets. The OTA regularly informs its membership about new regulations and strongly encourages their membership to be safe operators.

As for the quadrupling of fines, I appreciate the concern you've raised on behalf of your constituents and the disruption they feel because of trucks that travel on the roadways overnight — that's the real issue — and I'd be happy to take your request under advisement when we look at changes to the Highway Traffic Act.

PETITIONS

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has announced its intention of dumping the financing for ambulances, social housing and public health care services on to the backs of municipalities; and

"Whereas this irresponsible action will create a shortfall of more than \$18 million for local governments in St Catharines and the Niagara region; and

"Whereas local representatives in St Catharines and the Niagara region will be forced to either raise property taxes by as much as \$200 per household or cut services; and

"Whereas Mike Harris called municipal representatives 'whiners' when they tried to explain to him that his proposal was unfair and would create gaps in important services such as the delivery of public health care; and

"Whereas the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing accused local representatives of being opportunistic simply because they attempted to point out that the Mike Harris proposal was unfair and primarily designed to fund his ill-advised tax scheme; and

"Whereas the Harris government refuses to listen to the representatives who work closest with their constituents, the municipal representatives;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Mike Harris government to scrap its downloading plan, which will cause either an increase in property taxes or an unacceptable cut to important local services."

I affix my signature, as I am in full agreement with the sentiments in this petition.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas heritage is vitally important to the social and economic health of Ontario communities and Ontario residents; and

"Whereas community museums, galleries and heritage organizations work hard to protect, promote, manage and develop our provincial heritage resources; and

"Whereas the provincial government has a responsibility to the people of Ontario to promote the value of heritage and heritage conservation;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide stronger support to Ontario's heritage institutions and organizations and to work with the people of Ontario to establish a new heritage act."

1450

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have a petition and it reads like this:

"Be it resolved that in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario must immediately improve funding of the hospital and the health system to alleviate major gaps that have developed in Ontario's health system. This is evidenced by chronic gridlock in emergency rooms, lack of sufficient nursing staff and massive debts accumulated by hospitals. The government of Ontario must ensure that sufficient capital dollars are supplied on a timely basis to

allow restructuring to occur without negatively impacting patients.

"Does it now exist that in the case that this has not been the case, the government of Ontario must commit to community services being in place before hospitals or beds are closed. The government of Ontario must strike an immediate independent review of the real impact of hospital and health services restructuring on the quality of patient care."

I affix my signature to this petition.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I have a petition from 49 people in my constituency.

"We, the undersigned taxpayers of rural Ontario, oppose the current Ministry of Education and Training's funding formula in relation to rural school boards. We believe that special consideration should be given to the fact that our population is spread over a wide geographical area. A blanket funding formula for such a large and diverse province of Ontario will not work for all citizens equally."

I'll be glad to sign this.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Minister of Education intends on taking more than \$1 billion out of Ontario's education system at a time when there is an increasing consensus on the importance of supporting our schools and classrooms; and

"Whereas per pupil funding in the province of Ontario now ranks below other jurisdictions, such as Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri and Nebraska; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has now embarked on an advertising campaign which will cost the taxpayers of Ontario over \$1 million; and

"Whereas the government commercial doesn't constitute an important public announcement and instead is clearly an abuse of public funds, because they are self-serving political messages which are designed to influence public opinion; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government could cancel the advertising campaign and use the \$1 million which belongs to the taxpayers of Ontario for the purchase of 40,000 textbooks;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the government to cancel their blatantly partisan, self-serving political advertising campaign and redirect the taxpayers' \$1 million to classroom funding."

I'm signing my name to this document.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all schools in Ontario should be safe learning and working environments; and

"Whereas all Ontarians should be assured that safe school programs are in place in all Ontario schools; and

"Whereas Dan Newman, MPP for Scarborough Centre, has introduced a private member's bill entitled An Act to Promote Safety in Ontario Schools and Create Positive Learning Environments for Ontario Students, 1998; and

"Whereas Mr Newman's bill will:

"Require all boards in Ontario to design and implement school safety programs, school codes of conduct, and anti-vandalism policies;

"Provide for effective early intervention strategies by requiring boards to design and implement anti-bullying policies and by providing boards with the ability to direct psychological assessments of students that they believe are at risk;

"Provide a provincial violence and weapons-free schools policy and allow principals the ability to exclude violent students from regular classroom settings;

"Give police the tools they need by creating a new provincial offence for trespassing on school property and backing it up with real consequences;

"Direct all boards in Ontario to design and implement alternative education programs for suspended and excluded students;

"Require parents to be liable for any damage done to school property by their children; and

"Protect teachers and staff from civil liability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To pass into law Mr Newman's Safe Schools Act as quickly as possible."

I affix my signature and I'm very proud of Mr Newman.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Just a tip: Next time, member for Huron, if you want to do a petition you should stand up.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a petition addressed to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas we are concerned about the quality of health care in Ontario;

"Whereas we do not believe health care should be for sale;

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is taking steps to allow profit-driven companies to provide health care services in Ontario;

"Whereas we won't stand for profits over people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not privatize our health care services."

I concur and I will affix my signature.

RAIL SERVICE

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario entitled "Save the Tracks."

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"We want passenger rail service southbound from Barrie to Toronto. You must prevent the tracks from being torn up."

There are over 100 names on this petition, and I endorse it.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have a petition that says "Save the Dieu."

"The Health Services Restructuring Commission, HSRC, has given notice that it intends to direct the Hotel Dieu Hospital to close and to require that the Sisters of St Joseph cease to be governed. If the proposed direction is made and implemented, then access to high-quality health care will be seriously undermined in Kingston and region.

"The sisters are recognized for their leadership in the health care community. They have developed the plan for and operated an efficient outpatient teaching hospital and have provided a high quality of patient care for 123 years from the same location. Their distinct values and philosophy, coupled with the sisters' tradition of compassionate care, must not disappear.

"The HSRC's proposed direction calls for the dismissal of the sisters from their role in the governance in outpatient health care at the Hotel Dieu Hospital. This is not in the best interests of the patients and families in this city and region. The people of Kingston deserve to have access to the kind of quality health care for which the sisters are well recognized.

"Those who must use public transportation to get to outpatient clinics will be seriously affected. Taxpayers should not have to shoulder any extra burden in paying for a new outpatient facility, when the Hotel Dieu site can accommodate the needs of the people of Kingston. Many downtown businesses will suffer greatly should the site be closed.

"The sisters of Hotel Dieu Hospital are asking you to help them in their response to the commission by signing this petition."

I affix my signature to this petition.

SCHOOL PRAYER

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I have here a petition signed by a number of members of the Loyal Orange Lodge No 370. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the members of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ontario, are firm supporters of the public school education system and the Protestant faith;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the government of Ontario to reinstate the Lord's Prayer in the public school system of Ontario."

HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This is to the government of Ontario.

"Since the Hotel Dieu Hospital has played and continues to play a vital role in the delivery of health care services in St Catharines and the Niagara region; and

"Since Hotel Dieu has modified its role over the years as part of a rationalization of medical services in St Catharines and has assumed the position of a regional health care facility in such areas as kidney dialysis and oncology; and

"Since the Niagara region is experiencing underfunding in the health care field and requires more medical services and not fewer services; and

"Since Niagara residents are required at present to travel outside of the Niagara region to receive many specialized services that could be provided in city hospitals and thereby not require local patients to make difficult and inconvenient trips down our highways to other centres; and

"Since the Niagara hospital restructuring committee used a Toronto consulting firm to develop its recommendations and was forced to take into account a cut of over \$40 million in funding for Niagara hospitals when carrying out its study; and

"Since the population of the Niagara region is older than that in most areas of the province and more elderly people tend to require more hospital services;

"We, the undersigned, request that the government of Ontario keep the election commitment of Premier Mike Harris not to close hospitals in our province, and we call upon the Premier to reject any recommendation to close Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I affix my signature as I'm complete agreement with the sentiments of this petition.

1500

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I present a petition which was delivered to me by the Honourable Al Palladini. This petition was delivered to his office, and I'm presenting it on his behalf. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas most Ontario residents do not have adequate access to effective palliative care in time of need;

"Whereas meeting the needs of Ontarians of all ages for relief of preventable pain and suffering, as well as the provision of emotional and spiritual support, should be a priority to our health care system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to resolve that a task force be appointed to develop a palliative care bill of rights that would ensure

the best possible treatment, care, protection and support for Ontario citizens and their families in time of need.

"The task force should include palliative care experts in pain management, community palliative care and ethics in order to determine effective safeguards for the right to life and care of individuals who cannot or who can no longer decide issues of medical care for themselves.

"The appointed task force would provide interim reports to the government and the public and continue in existence to review the implementation of its recommendations."

This is particularly appropriate, given the debate we had earlier this morning. I affix my signature too.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a further petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas due to the Harris funding cuts to education the Toronto Catholic District School Board is being forced to consider the closing of 29 Catholic elementary schools in the city of Toronto before next September; and

"Whereas the parents of the students of Venerable John Merlini school do not want the school closed, because it is operating at full capacity, and fear the further chaos and crisis the Harris government is imposing on the education of their children; and

"Whereas there is apprehension and turmoil in the community that due to government rules to determine school capacity, hundreds of students will have to find a new school next September;

"Now, therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"We call upon the Minister of Education, who has the primary responsibility for providing a quality education for each and every student in Ontario, to:

"1. Listen to the views being expressed by the teachers and parents of Venerable John Merlini school students, who are concerned about the implications and disruptive effects the school closure would have on their children;

"2. Recognize the fundamental importance of our local schools to our neighbourhood community;

"3. Live up to its commitment to provide adequate funding for the important and essential components of a good education and not allow the closing of Venerable John Merlini school, because it is operating at full capacity."

I concur and I will affix my signature.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**LEGAL AID SERVICES ACT, 1998****LOI DE 1998****SUR LES SERVICES D'AIDE JURIDIQUE**

Mr Martiniuk, on behalf of Mr Harnick, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 68, An Act to incorporate Legal Aid Ontario and to create the framework for the provision of legal aid services in Ontario, to amend the Legal Aid Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 68, Loi constituant en personne morale Aide juridique Ontario, établissant le cadre de la prestation des services d'aide juridique en Ontario, modifiant la Loi sur l'aide juridique et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): Madam Speaker, I would request unanimous consent to share my time with the members for Simcoe Centre and York-Mackenzie, and in addition, that both the opposition and the third party lead speakers be stood down to another date.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Just to be clear, you have moved that the lead speaker for the third party be stood down for a later date?

Mr Martiniuk: The opposition and the third party.

The Acting Speaker: And the official opposition. Is that agreed? Agreed.

Mr Martiniuk: The purpose of the Legal Aid Services Act is to reform the legal aid system to better meet the needs of Ontarians who require legal aid services. The legislation would establish the mandate, governance, accountability, services and funding for a new organization, which would be called Legal Aid Ontario. This organization would be independent of government and would be responsible for finding better ways of delivering legal aid services to those in need.

Thirty years ago, Ontario's legal aid plan was established on three principles that still apply today. First, services would be provided by private sector lawyers to Ontarians who need legal aid. Second, eligible individuals would be entitled to legal aid. Third, the plan would be operated as a partnership between the province, as the funder, and the Law Society of Upper Canada, the administrator. That was 1967.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, lawyers and community groups concluded that the judiciary system needed to be supplemented in order for the plan to adequately address the needs of low-income Ontarians. As a result, in 1971 the community legal aid clinic system was established.

When our government took office in 1995, it was clear that something needed to be done about the legal aid plan. Between 1989 and 1994, government spending on legal aid doubled. The previous government negotiated a four-year memorandum of agreement to deal with the funding

problem, but there was no corresponding attempt to reform the plan or find better ways to provide services.

When this government assumed office, we honoured the funding levels guaranteed by the previous government, and we insisted on financial stability and more accountability to the taxpayers. During the past three years, the Attorney General has worked with the Law Society of Upper Canada to successfully bring legal aid spending under control.

It is against this backdrop of the need for change that in December 1996 the Attorney General established the Ontario Legal Aid Review. It was to be the first comprehensive review of the Ontario legal aid plan during its 30-year history. The review was chaired by Professor John McCamus, one of Canada's foremost legal scholars. The panel was composed of people who reflected a diverse experience and were best qualified to provide advice about the future course of legal aid in Ontario.

The panel was an independent task force to recommend changes to legal aid in order to provide more and better services for clients; in short, to make recommendations for a flexible, efficient and effective system that reflected the changes in population, laws, and current and future legal needs of Ontarians who need legal aid services. Input was sought from many sources, including the public. This included groups such as the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. Last September, the team's review was submitted to the Attorney General.

After receiving the McCamus review, the Attorney General consulted extensively with the public, community groups, consumers of legal aid, legal aid clinics and the legal community, and also with groups such as the John Howard Society, the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Criminal Lawyers Association. Everyone agreed and told us that after 30 years without significant change, it was time to reinvent legal aid, and that a new organization was the best way to create a legal aid plan better able to provide high-quality services for Ontarians.

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The proposed reforms contained in Bill 68 build on Professor McCamus's recommendations, which formed the blueprint for the new organization. Bill 68 would ensure that Legal Aid Ontario operates on three principles: more and better service, more accountability for public funds, and independence.

Let me outline improvements in the area of service. Legal Aid Ontario would have a mandate to identify and assess the unique needs of people, groups, communities and regions across this province. The new organization would respond to those needs by setting priorities and focusing its resources on developing high-quality services.

This new plan would encourage the evolution of flexible and innovative ways to deliver services and to run pilot projects that test new approaches. These alternative forms of delivery would complement the current system of legal aid clinics and certificates. These two systems would continue as the foundation for the delivery of legal aid services. The result of these reforms would be a legal aid

plan that is more flexible, effective and accessible, a plan that better responds to the needs of legal aid consumers.

In addition to providing better service, there would also be improvements in the area of accountability. Let me outline some of these provisions.

Legal Aid Ontario would be expected to manage its financial resources and deliver service effectively. The organization would be more open and accountable for public funds that are devoted to legal aid services. Several measures would ensure this result, including the following:

Members of the public will serve on the board of directors. I think this is a very important step, that the public have some degree of governance in regard to this new legal aid system. The organization would be required to table an annual report in the Legislature. An annual audit would be performed by the Provincial Auditor. Annual budgets and three-year funding projections would be submitted to the Ministry of the Attorney General for approval in advance. An annual business plan and multi-year strategic plan would also be submitted to the Ministry of the Attorney General for approval.

These reforms would ensure that the organization uses its budget to deliver the maximum amount of high-quality service at a cost that taxpayers can afford; in other words, deliver more and better services at costs consistent with its budget.

We are also proposing improvements in the area of governance. We are proposing a governance structure that would be led by an expert board of 11 directors. The board would be chosen from members of the public, legal aid consumers, the business sector and the legal profession from all parts of our province. Board members would have knowledge of or experience with Ontario's legal aid services, the law, the justice system, business and financial management, and the needs of those requiring legal aid.

The board's composition would be as follows: The majority of directors would be non-lawyers. Five of the 11 directors would be nominated by the Attorney General. Another five directors would be chosen from a list of nominees provided by the Law Society of Upper Canada. The chair of the board would be appointed by the Attorney General following a nomination process.

The proposed legislation also lays the groundwork for Legal Aid Ontario's independence from government and the legal profession. Independence ensures that the governance system is free of conflicts of interest between the public who need legal aid services, the governing body, service-providers and government. This approach is consistent with similar legal aid reform in most provinces and in the countries of England, Wales, Australia and New Zealand.

Our government knows that quality services require appropriate funding. Our government would provide Legal Aid Ontario with a stable, guaranteed budget for the first three years of the organization's operations. Provincial funding would be set at the same amount as this current year. Funding at this level would provide it with sufficient financial resources to deliver high-quality services.

It is expected that Legal Aid Ontario would begin operating by April 1, 1999. A plan would be put in place to ensure the smooth transition to the new organization.

I would like to conclude with a few important thoughts.

Legal aid reform is necessary. Taken as a whole, Bill 68 lays the groundwork to do just that. It creates a new legal aid system well suited to meet the needs of Ontarians into the new millennium. It ensures that high-quality legal aid services are delivered at a cost that taxpayers can afford. It provides the correct model of governance and gives the public a greater role in the management of legal aid services. And it will once again put Ontario at the forefront of the evolution of legal aid systems.

For those reasons, I invite all members of this House to join me in supporting this bill.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I am very pleased to join the debate on second reading of Bill 68 today.

The legislation to be introduced deals with a number of areas. It establishes Legal Aid Ontario. It lists the objects and mandates of the corporation. It sets advisory committees. It lists the powers and duties of the transitional board and, through the Law Society of Upper Canada, outlines the services to be provided to clients. It sets financial eligibility. It sets clinic terms and funding. It permits cost recovery. It permits a temporary trustee if necessary. It requires a memorandum of understanding for accountability. I think those are the pillars and the framework of this legislation that are important for it to succeed.

There are a couple of aspects I'd like to deal with on this particular piece of legislation.

The first is, why amend the Legal Aid Act? In my opinion, and I think it's shared by other people who were consulted in this area, legal aid is long overdue for change. The status quo was not working for Ontarians who needed access to legal aid services.

The proposed changes build on the first comprehensive review of the Ontario legal aid plan in Ontario's history. The review was chaired by law professor John McCamus, one of Canada's foremost legal scholars, and formed the blueprint for the creation of the new model to deliver legal aid services in Ontario.

Recognizing that the demand for legal aid had changed greatly during the past three decades and that between 1989 and 1994 spending on legal aid had doubled, the government launched a review to ensure that the \$230 million spent annually on legal aid provided the maximum amount of high-quality legal services to those Ontarians who need them most.

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During the legal aid review, major legal, community and user groups were involved in the public hearings. The review received more than 200 written submissions. Following the release of the Ontario legal aid review in September 1997, our government consulted widely to get the public's feedback. I think that's one of the important features of this legislation, the public consultations that took place, because it is a very sensitive area, not only for the people who provide the services through the legal

profession but also the users and the people who need the services, in particular in the family law and criminal law areas.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): On a point of order, Speaker: I don't think there's a quorum in the House.

The Acting Speaker: Clerk, could you check and see if there is a quorum, please.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: Speaker, a quorum is now present.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Simcoe Centre.

Mr Tascona: I am very pleased to continue with this debate with respect to the Legal Aid Act, in particular, Bill 68.

One of the questions out there is the fact that lawyers are no longer going to be required to contribute to legal aid funding. At present, lawyers have 5% deducted from each legal aid account, as well as contributing a levy paid by each lawyer in the province through the law society. The levy totalled \$5.8 million in 1997 and 1998. If Bill 68 is passed, administration will be transferred from the Law Society of Upper Canada to Legal Aid Ontario, an independent statutory agency. At present, Ontario is the only province which requires lawyers to pay a levy to fund legal aid. Ontario is also the only province which imposes a statutory clawback on lawyers' billings. Moreover, no other professional group in Ontario is required to contribute directly to the costs of a government-run social program.

The Law Society Act requires the Law Foundation of Ontario to contribute 75% of all revenues earned from lawyers' trust accounts to the Ontario legal aid plan. The law foundation will continue to contribute these funds. It's the law society that has proposed that it no longer continue funding legal aid once the administration is transferred to Legal Aid Ontario. The law society points out, as I've stated, that no other professional group in Ontario is required to contribute directly to the cost of a government-run social program. The ministry shares this view, as I do. Moreover, Ontario is the only province which currently requires lawyers to pay a levy in addition to fund legal aid, as well as the statutory clawback on lawyers' billings.

There's one aspect I'd like to deal with. As many people know, legal aid is used by a number of citizens to fund a family law case or a criminal case, but there's one other area that it's been used to fund, and that involves immigration.

I'd just like to point out that in regard to the immigration and refugee law, Bill 68 would guarantee that Legal Aid Ontario will maintain service for immigrants and refugees at current levels for two years. The Immigration and Refugee Board is the responsibility of the federal government, yet Ontario pays the majority of the legal aid costs for those appearing before it, which are similar in terms of the costs the province is paying, for example, towards OHIP with respect to immigrants who come to this country, and also with respect to welfare, another

added feature that the federal government has reduced or is not paying anything towards: these social programs and towards the health care of this province.

With respect to health care, I think the federal government contributes something like eight cents on the dollar and at one time they contributed 50% towards welfare in this province, and they're not even close to that today. That's another area where the federal government is shirking its responsibility, not only with respect to social programs and health care programs, but also with respect to the legal fees that are put forth to assist immigrants and refugees in front of a federal immigration board.

The federal government has dramatically reduced its funding over the past several years with respect to funding legal costs in front of the federal immigration board. Federal funding for immigration and refugee cases has declined from \$14.4 million in 1991-92 to an estimated \$3.8 million in 1997-98. The federal share of funding for immigration and refugee legal aid services has decreased from 46% in 1991-92 to approximately 23% in 1997-98. Judging by their performance with respect to funding for health care in Ontario, with respect to funding for welfare in Ontario, that's going to go down dramatically also, because their commitment to this province is at best unstable, and there is no commitment to this province.

The federal government's responsibility for immigrants is alarming, because where do these legal aid costs go? They go towards representation in front of the federal immigration board and in terms of dealing with providing fair process and also providing representation for their legal rights.

What is the federal government doing? They're responsible for immigration in this country. What they're doing is saying to the provinces: "You're going to be responsible for paying the legal cost to represent immigrants in front of our court, in front of our tribunal, because we're not taking responsibility for it any more. We're responsible for immigration. We'll let the immigrants come into this country, but don't look for health care, don't look for welfare, don't look for social programs and don't look for legal representation, because we're not there to provide the funding for it." That's just another example of where the federal government is shirking its responsibility to those who are in need as they come to this country.

The next area I want to talk on deals with other jurisdictions. How will the board of the new legal aid corporation compare to similar boards in other jurisdictions? I think that's a valid question that needs to be responded to. Among the 10 provinces, only three legal aid plans are presently administered by provincial law societies: Ontario, Alberta and New Brunswick. Six provinces administer legal aid through an independent statutory organization. In Prince Edward Island, legal aid services are administered directly by the provincial government.

The six provinces which administer legal aid through a statutory corporation have the following governance features, and that's what we're proposing through this legislation: The corporation is administered by a board of directors. The size of the board varies from seven in

Newfoundland to 17 in Nova Scotia. The appointment process varies. In Quebec all directors are appointed by the LGIC. In British Columbia the majority of appointees are chosen by the stakeholders. Other provinces provide for LGIC appointments but with a certain number of nominations to be made from lists supplied by the stakeholders.

The qualifications for serving as a director also vary. Some jurisdictions require directors with knowledge of legal aid or stakeholders' issues. Others emphasize knowledge of the law. Currently, only the United Kingdom requires a broadly based, highly skilled expert board with business and management expertise in addition to knowledge of the legal aid issues.

1530

The proposed governance structure of the new legal aid corporation in Ontario under Bill 68 has the following features. There will be 11 directors. The majority of the directors are to be non-lawyers. Five of the 11 directors are to be nominated by the Attorney General. Five directors are to be chosen from the nominations by the Law Society of Upper Canada. The chair of the board would be appointed by the Attorney General following a nomination process. Board members would have to meet a composite board profile set out in the bill, designed to ensure that the board has expertise and is broadly based. Board members will have management and financial expertise as well as experience and knowledge of Ontario's legal aid service, law and the justice system. The board would be representative of the geographic diversity of the province. The board members would be chosen from the public, consumers of legal aid, business and the legal community.

The changes that are being put forth through Bill 68 are very sound changes in terms of the law society, which has expressed interest in no longer being a part of the process in terms of directly running legal aid but is still going to have some input with respect to the board and its representatives, which is very prudent on behalf of the government. The bottom line is that legal aid is going to be provided through an independent corporation that is going to be independent of the government in terms of how it's going to provide these vital services.

Obviously they are independent of the federal government, because the federal government has decided it's not going to own up to its responsibilities and fund legal aid responsibly for the people who need it. They bring these people to this country and yet they say: "Don't look for legal representation in front of the immigration board. We're not going to provide it to you." All they are providing is 23% of the funding towards the legal aid in this province. Typically, the federal government, in a critical area, immigration and refugee boards — which we're not responsible for as a provincial government; that's a federal responsibility in terms of the immigration board they provide and the responsibility that they're supposed to ensure we have an immigration process that is going to adequately provide legal representation to the people who need it. But that's not the federal government's worry, because obviously they feel: "Let's dump it on the prov-

inces again. We'll let whatever immigrants want to come into this country, but if they do need legal protection, don't come to the federal government, because we're not going to provide any money for it."

With this legal aid bill, certainly the changes are long overdue. There was extensive consultation on this and, quite frankly, agreement with respect to who the stakeholders are going to be and who is going to be involved. It certainly has a representative basis in terms of the fact that it's not going to be all stocked by lawyers. There are going to be non-lawyers, people from the business community and people who use legal aid.

The focus of legal aid is not all immigration and refugee board claims. I would say the vast majority of the funds go into family law cases and criminal cases. Obviously, those are responsibilities of the provincial government. Those are very vital areas to the citizens of this province, and the province wants to be in a position to make sure, through this new corporation, that those services are provided adequately.

We can't look to the federal government for proper funding in anything, because basically they're not involved, as they'll say, in provincial programs. They want to set the standards, for example, in health care, yet they don't want to put any money into it. They want to be the arbiter, the feel-good people who provide health care in the country, but, "Don't look to us for money." The same thing goes for social programs. But when it comes to fundamental legal rights and providing them through legal aid, they've been shirking their responsibility in a vital area, and I want the public to know that.

In the funding of legal aid, the provincial government — we're not going to say the federal government, because we know they are shirking their responsibilities — is also committed to three years of stable funding for the agency at the 1998-99 level. This will provide the proposed agency with the financial stability to accomplish the proposed changes.

What are those proposed changes? To provide high-quality services, to develop flexible and innovative ways to deliver services, and to run pilots that test new approaches.

So what are the main elements of the Legal Aid Services Act? The act establishes the mandate, the governance structure, accountability and services for a new organization called Legal Aid Ontario. Legal Aid Ontario would be independent, as I said, of the provincial government — certainly independent of the federal government, because they're not funding anything and they don't want to have any responsibility for providing legal rights.

We have this so-called gun control registry system; they don't want to fund that either. They want to make sure the province administers it, and the people who are law-abiding citizens who own guns are going to have to pay a fee to fund this registry. It's all right with the federal government: "Make sure the province goes out there and collects it, make sure that we get the money from these law-abiding citizens," because, quite frankly, that's another way to raise money, just like the EI surplus.

They raised that surplus on the backs of the workers. They've got a surplus of \$20 billion. What are they going to do with it? They don't know what to do with it. "We can't count our pennies, so we're going to count our billions," and what are they going to do with it? They're not going to give it back to the workers. They're not going to give it back to the taxpayers. It's the taxpayers' money, but they're not going to give it back to them. "Let's figure a way we can put it into general revenue; let's figure a way we can confuse the public and take that money. We'll use it and spend it because we're good at spending it because we're Liberals. We're good at spending the public's money."

Getting back to the legal aid bill, as I said, it's going to be independent of the government. That's right: independent of this provincial government. I think that's a fair way to go, because then they'll be responsible in making sure that the system works for their clients. I'd like to see this agency go to the federal government and say: "If you want to dump all the immigration problems on us and you don't want to make sure that the people who need immigration legal representation are going to get it, you've got to own up to your responsibility. You can't point to the provincial government any more. You've got to point to yourselves."

I'd be interested to know where the provincial Liberals will be on this. Quite frankly, we know what Allan Rock wants. They want a parasite government in place, they want the provincial Liberals in place, so they basically can do whatever they want. They don't want any real checks and balances so the public will know what shenanigans the federal Liberals are getting away with. "Let's put in a provincial government full of Liberals and make sure nobody knows what's going on."

Getting back to the legal aid bill, how is Legal Aid Ontario going to improve legal aid services? I think that's a fundamental point. Let's face it, it's very important. We can't look to the federal government for more money, because quite frankly they're not going to give any more money. So how can we improve legal aid services?

It's not our intention to forsake the successes of legal aid. It has provided good representation, good lawyers, good service to legal aid clients, people in need who need legal services, for the past 30 years. That system was through issuing certificates to private lawyers in criminal and family matters. I say criminal and family matters, something that's within the jurisdiction of this province. They would remain the foundation of the service provision.

Clinics would continue to deliver front-line services in areas of law which particularly affect low-income individuals. That's who we're dealing with here. We're dealing with people in need, low-income individuals who cannot afford a private lawyer and have to come to legal aid. There's another level also, where people who can't afford a private lawyer or can't qualify for the services that are provided through legal aid go to a clinic. Of course, those clinics aren't funded by the federal government, they are funded by the provincial government,

administering federal law: criminal law and immigration law.

Bill 68, the Legal Aid Services Act, 1998, if passed, would provide us with ways to supplement and enhance the existing certificate and clinic systems. It would create a legal aid system which will serve us well over the next 30 years. The viability of this legal aid program is fundamental to a just and fair society. I'd echo the words of Pierre Trudeau, "a just and fair society," because the current federal government and the provincial Liberals don't know what a just and fair society is. When it comes to helping people who need services, they are not there. "Don't come looking to us for the money. We'll basically just talk, but we're not going to walk the walk. We'll just basically tell you what to do, but don't look for the money."

1540

Legal Aid Ontario would be responsible for high-quality services which meet the needs of Ontarians who require legal aid. It would be obligated to encourage new ways to better deliver services and to ensure that services are cost-effective and efficient.

The Attorney General has done a lot of good work in this area with respect to bringing in mediation services in the family law area and the civil litigation area, streamlining the criminal court system, bringing in courts that deal specifically with sexual abuse and sexual assault, basically restructuring, trying to get fair justice and immediate justice, because that's the only way the system is going to work. But of course, don't look for money from the federal government, because they're not going to provide you any to administer the Criminal Code. That's not their bailiwick. They just want to make sure the provinces administer their programs without money.

The proposed bill will provide a statutory basis for the major areas of service delivery. It focuses on the key areas of legal aid law, including criminal, family, clinic and mental health law, but leaves specific priority-setting to the corporation.

Legal Aid Ontario could also provide legal aid services in other areas of civil law where they are needed, where we need flexibility. The bill provides Legal Aid Ontario with the flexibility to use a variety of service delivery methods, including certificates, community clinics, staff offices, student legal aid societies, aboriginal legal service corporations, duty counsel, public legal education, assisted self-representation and alternative dispute resolution. There are a number of different ways to deliver the service.

We fully expect that Legal Aid Ontario will continue and expand the pilot projects currently being developed by the law society. In order to ensure the stability and the continuation of high-quality services, the bill provides that certificates remain the foundation of the delivery of criminal and family services. Similarly, clinic law services will have community clinics as their foundation.

Is a message being sent out to the federal government here? I think there's a message being sent out to them: If you're not going to fund immigration and refugee claim-

ants with legal aid services, don't look to the province to do all your work. You're going to have to come to the pump and provide the legal representation to the federal immigration board and not look to the provinces to be dealing with your specific area of jurisdiction.

Of course, you won't hear from the provincial Liberals about that. They don't want to get out of line with the federal government because the federal government says, "We're going to work with you to make sure you defeat the Harris government." So they want to keep in good stead with their federal brothers and sisters. They're going to work together to make sure that Ontarians don't get good representation from their 101 elected MPs, because that's not what they are there for. They are basically just there to toe the party line, to make sure that Ontarians don't get their fair share of the EI surplus, don't get their fair share for CPP, don't get their fair share for health services, don't get their fair share for social services. But it's all in the good cause of federal Liberalism.

I think what we have reached here is a watershed with respect to legal aid representation. We're focusing on what legal aid should be out there for: dealing with family law, dealing with criminal law, dealing with mental health law, what's needed immediately for the citizens of this country.

In summing up, the Legal Aid Services Act, 1998, proposes a new organization, Legal Aid Ontario, to deliver better legal aid services to Ontarians. The organization would develop new and innovative ways to better provide legal aid services, would operate independently of this provincial government and would be clearly accountable for the use of public funds.

I urge all members of the House to support this legislation so Ontarians can benefit from better and more accountable legal aid services, but I'm not going to close without mentioning how the federal government has shirked their responsibility. Their funding is dropping. They think it's going to go unnoticed that they're not funding immigrant and refugee services in front of the Immigration and Refugee Board.

I close in support of this bill.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): I think we owe a debt of gratitude to the member for Simcoe Centre for so graphically pointing out the shortcomings of the federal government around this issue. I have never heard it said more eloquently, more succinctly. The Liberal members here, the cousins of the federal Liberal Party the member for Simcoe Centre was referring to, are all sitting there red-faced, ashamed of what their federal cousins have done. We empathize with the members of the Liberal Party.

Mr Curling: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: In describing me, a Liberal, as red-faced, I take offence at that. I'd like him to know that he should re-describe me as a Liberal over here.

The Acting Speaker: Is that a serious point of order? I would ask you to withdraw, because the member is offended by that description.

Mr Klees: I was sure I detected some red on his face, but if the member is offended, I will withdraw and just simply say that they look ashamed at the actions of their federal cousins.

I'm pleased to participate in this debate. We have followed through once again on a commitment made in the Common Sense Revolution that we would, when elected, reform the legal aid system in this province. We have done so. We have delivered.

It's not often that I can refer to the Toronto Star with any pleasure, but I'm prepared to do that today because even the Toronto Star of October 12, 1998, had the following to say, under the headline of "Sound Legal Aid Plan." I'd like to quote for the benefit of my colleagues and the people of Ontario who may not have read this article. It says as follows:

"It's been a long time coming, but Ontario's new legislation to overhaul the legal aid system was worth the wait.

"Attorney General Charles Harnick has tried hard to ease concerns that the government would starve the system after taking it over from the Law Society of Upper Canada." You'll recall that the reason for that was that the system was in fact in deep trouble; serious financial problems.

The article goes on to say:

"The Star" — and this is the Toronto Star — "wanted the new system to meet three tests:

"Legal aid should be independent, or as independent as possible given that the government both decides who will be prosecuted and how much will be spent defending against prosecution....

"The agency's budget should be adequate, predictable, and preferably multi-year....

"The agency should have room to experiment, innovate and test ideas."

It goes on to say, "Harnick has met our concerns on all points."

I'm sure that not only the Toronto Star but people across the province will welcome the reforms represented in this bill that's before the Legislature today.

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As a member of this Legislature, I've had a number of occasions over the last three years to meet with people in my office who have had contact with the legal aid system — contact on both sides, as consumers of the system as well as employees and lawyers working under the system. It is very clear that this system needed reform. It wasn't working effectively. I don't think it was working effectively for any parties concerned.

There were often times when individuals who by the very nature of having qualified for legal aid were destitute. Financially, they don't have the resources to be able to retain services. I was quite disturbed on a number of occasions, when I was told about how they had qualified for legal aid, that their particular certificate allocation under the legal aid certificate had been used up by the lawyer who was representing them. That was that, yet their particular circumstance still hadn't been resolved.

Often they were simply told by the individual representing them that they could no longer be represented. I can tell you that in itself shows a fundamental weakness of the system as it was, because if the system itself can't help those who can't help themselves, who don't have other resources, what is it for?

We have before us now a system that will deal with some of those inadequacies. I'd like to refer to one aspect of the act, and that is the offences that are provided for under the Legal Aid Services Act, 1998.

It's an offence now under this act for lawyers or service-providers to submit fraudulent accounts.

It's an offence for Legal Aid Ontario or its employees to fail to maintain the confidentiality of information obtained in a quality assurance audit, which is provided for under subsection 91(5).

It's an offence for legal aid lawyers or service-providers to extra-bill. Again, often I have had representations where individuals have had a certificate and they've found that their lawyer was asking them to supplement the fees they were being paid. We've closed this loop. It's important for individuals who need to rely on legal aid in our province that they can do so without having that kind of intimidation factor introduced to the relationship between them and their lawyer.

It's an offence for applicants to make false statements about their financial eligibility for legal aid. We will wait to see, but obviously we're concerned that taxpayers' dollars that are being used to fund this important program are in fact coming to the aid of those people who need it, not to those who choose to use the system and abuse it. It's important that we have those safeguards built into this legislation.

It's an offence for a lawyer or a service-provider to fail to disclose knowledge of an applicant misrepresenting their finances. This goes again to the heart, if you will, of the integrity of the system — not that there is necessarily rampant abuse of this, but there have been occasions. I certainly have some personal knowledge, through contact with individuals who have come to me to tell me of circumstances that they personally know of where there has been this kind of misrepresentation. The taxpayer, I believe, is more than willing to come to the aid of people in our society who need help. Everyone wants to ensure that in our society people who need legal advice have it available to them. But no taxpayer wants to have their support abused, so it's important for everyone to note that this legislation deals with those issues.

The issue of how young offenders are dealt with under this act is important as well. Under this bill, a young person charged with an offence has the right to legal aid. When such an application is made, the corporation will assess the young person's financial eligibility, including the eligibility of the young person's parents. If in fact there is an ability to contribute to the legal costs, it's clear there is an obligation and a responsibility of those parents to make a contribution. If the financial criteria are met, the certificate then may be granted. If the young person or the parents do not meet the financial eligibility criteria, then a

certificate may well be denied. Again, I think that's very appropriate. Alternatively, if the person or parents have some financial means, they may be asked to contribute, as I indicated, to the cost of legal aid as a precondition of granting a certificate. If the young person or the parents refuse to contribute, the corporation in turn may as well refuse to issue a certificate. Once again, this is in the interests of ensuring the long-term sustainability and credibility of this program.

I'd like to refer to the role of the independent monitor as it is dealt with under Bill 68. In 1994, you will recall that the law society and the Ministry of the Attorney General entered into a memorandum of understanding which set out a multi-year fiscal arrangement for the funding and the management of the plan certificate program. Subsequently, the plan ran into financial difficulties and the role of the monitor appointed at that time was to oversee the operation and financial status of the plan during the term of the memorandum of understanding. That expires March 31, 1999.

Bill 68 does not specifically address the role of the independent monitor in respect of the new corporation. However, as part of the general oversight, the powers of the government may retain the independent monitor until the new agency has the capacity to provide services which were previously supplied by the monitor. Frankly, we believe that would be appropriate; we believe it's important that there is a proper transition period during which time all the business matters relating to this program are dealt with.

The area directors I believe are an important aspect of this proposed bill. This bill proposes a less cumbersome and more flexible framework for establishing areas and appointing area directors. Subsection 15(1) of the act gives Legal Aid Ontario the authority to designate areas within the province for the purpose of providing legal aid services. Subsection 22(3) gives Legal Aid Ontario the sole authority to appoint area directors if this power is not subject to the approval of the Attorney General through order in council. I think that in itself is important from the standpoint of the independence for the management of the program.

Like the current Legal Aid Act, the Legal Aid Services Act, 1998, specifies, however, that each area director must be a member of the law society. The Legal Aid Services Act also maintains the current rule that area directors shall not render legal services to any person except as authorized under the act. Taken together, these provisions ensure that area directors have legal expertise and are free from conflicts of interest.

I believe the objective that we were looking for in this bill will be achieved. People throughout the province have been consulted as to the structure of the act, as to the program, the kind of structure that would work most beneficially to those who are consumers of legal aid in our province.

It's important to recognize, because on occasion accusations come forward that this government has not consulted broadly enough, that certainly in this particular

case we consulted extensively with the public. Consumer groups working with low-income Ontarians such as Elizabeth Fry, the John Howard Society, the St Leonard's Society of Canada and the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses were all consulted and had some valuable input into these discussions. Consumer groups working with disadvantaged communities, including Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped, Advocacy Centre for the Elderly, Aboriginal Legal Services, the National Council of Welfare, the Canadian Mental Health Association, were a very important part of our consultation.

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So that we don't leave out a very important group here I can say that we also consulted with lawyers' groups. A couple of my colleagues will be very pleased about this. We did in fact consult with the law society, the Canadian Bar Association, the Criminal Lawyers Association, the family lawyers association, the County and District Law Presidents' Association, and the refugee lawyers association.

The response was consistent throughout all of those consultations. People wanted a legal aid plan that was independent of both government and service-providers. They wanted a system that would be accountable and well managed with business principles and they wanted a system that would have fiscal stability and would be sustainable. The result of a system like that will no doubt be improved services for all Ontarians.

I would like to suggest to you that this reform has been long overdue. We have people throughout the province who depend on legal aid services to ensure that their rights are protected. My colleague from Simcoe Centre referred earlier to the fact that the federal government, the cousins to the honourable member opposite from St Catharines, continue to download responsibilities on to the province of Ontario. They have the levers on refugee and immigration. They continue to open the door to refugees, the largest percentage of whom end up in this province.

We're not here to say that that door should be closed, but when you open that door, I would also say that there should be the appropriate funding that follows those refugees. Not only do those refugees end up in our court system and dependent on our legal aid program, to which the federal government does not contribute one red cent, but they become a burden on the taxpayers of Ontario. We think that is inappropriate. We would ask the support of the Liberal Party of Ontario in urging their federal cousins, who hold the levers to that refugee issue, to also open the door for some funding.

That's not the only place that the federal government of this country has let this province down. We heard just yesterday that multi-billions of dollars of fiscal dividends will not be returned to the taxpayers of this province, in spite of the fact that some \$2.4 billion of funding has been cut off from this province for health and social services. Not once have I heard the leader of the Liberal Party of this province challenge his federal counterparts on that unfairness.

Interjection: That's shameful.

Mr Klees: It is shameful. The people of this province should know that the leader of the Liberal Party — and in fact I haven't heard one member of the Liberal Party in this House come to the aid of the taxpayers, the workers, the employers of this province. I must say, though, that in this House, Speaker, your party, the NDP, has shown principle, has shown the courage, to challenge the federal government. In fact, I believe it was your party that introduced a resolution in this House so that we would unanimously, as a provincial Legislature, go to the doors of Paul Martin, the federal Liberal member and the finance minister of this country, and challenge him on the fairness of his decision not to return the appropriate dividend back to the workers, to the employers, to the taxpayers of Ontario.

Your party introduced that resolution. Our party unanimously endorsed that. We were looking for a unanimous endorsement from the House and it was the Liberal Party of Ontario that said no. We were devastated that we could not pull together a unanimous resolution in this House. The member for St Catharines — I was sure I heard him say no to that proposal. We couldn't believe it, because normally this member from St Catharines, although he is a Liberal, we believe generally makes some good decisions.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): You didn't hear me say no. You can't mislead the House.

The Acting Speaker: You have to withdraw that, member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I said no one can mislead this House. I would never accuse anybody of misleading the House. I would be happy to withdraw that, because those are the rules of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Go ahead.

Mr Klees: As I was saying, generally we would have expected at least the member for St Catharines, although he's a Liberal, to have taken a stand on this particular issue — he failed to do so — in support of health, in support of social services, in support of quality of life in Ontario. He and his colleagues refused to take that important stand. We were disappointed. Speaker, we were proud of you and your party for joining with us on that.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bradley: On this particular bill, I think everybody would agree that there are changes that have to be made to the legal aid system, some which will assist those who need that more so than is the case today, and others who would want to see some responsibility brought into it.

The member sits with a smirk on his face, I should tell the people at home, playing little games. You people have to be very careful with this. You know, you sound like Lucien Bouchard. This little coalition you're putting before us — that's exactly what Lucien Bouchard says. I'm sure, during his election campaign this fall against Jean Charest, your former federal leader — I'm sorry; your federal leader is Preston Manning — but the federal leader of maybe some of the other members here.

Mr Klees: On a point of personal privilege, Madam Speaker: The honourable member implied something about my allegiances politically that are unfounded.

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order. Continue.

Mr Bradley: I find it difficult to believe he would object to anything after his kind of remarks. I can't use the word I want to use.

I think it's a very dangerous game you play. I know it's funny in this House and I know you have fun. I think you actually sicken some of the NDPers by this, because they've been reading Rosemary Spiers's column, where federally they got together with the Reform Party and the Parti Québécois. I don't think you're going to see that happen very much any more, because they recognize what your agenda is and will not lose that focus.

I'll mention this in my remarks. You get block grants from the federal government that you can use in any way you want, but your choice is to give the money away in a tax cut to the richest people in this province. That is the choice you have made, despite the fact that your Premier was very supportive of every federal government cutting its expenditures.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I am happy to have two minutes to respond to the three members who spoke, Simcoe Centre, Cambridge and York-Mackenzie. In some respects New Democrats support this bill in principle. We have some concerns and we'll debate that.

I want to respond, because I don't have much time, to some of the comments they have made, one with respect to accusing the federal Liberal government of not flowing dollars to support this province, particularly with respect to support for refugees. They're right in that regard, I want to say, but I want to add that the Tories at the federal level, before the Liberals, were no less kind. They too engaged in reprehensible cutbacks against this province as it relates to issues of funds for social assistance, for post-secondary education and many other areas of interest to our folks here.

The member for York-Mackenzie seems to have a great deal of clarity when he attacks the federal government for downloading their responsibilities to us but seems not to make the observation that they contradict themselves when they then engage in similar downloading, to the municipal government, responsibilities for welfare, of course, and ambulance and child —

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere): What about your umpteen tax increases?

Mr Marchese: You've got to observe this problem as a contradiction, or at least you ought to, because it is. You can't have it both ways. You can't attack one level and then say, "Oh, but we're not doing anything wrong," because you have.

The member for Simcoe Centre talks about introducing a bill that is one of justice and refers to Trudeau, makes this a bill of justice and fairness to people. I don't know. Since when did they make this U-turn?

1610

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): It's very interesting to listen to the critiques of the remarks for the member for Simcoe Centre and York-Mackenzie. We must be hitting some reality here when we talk about the federal government's obligation to help pay for part of the costs involving newcomers to this country. I think what is even more important is that your federal friends have failed utterly to help newcomers to this country in settlement and immigration programs. The federal government is not paying the same amount of money to Ontario as it is to Quebec. I wonder what you would say then about M. Bouchard. How come he gets that additional amount of money? There is no difference in the rate of inflation between the city of Montreal and the city of Toronto, none whatsoever.

The biggest failure of your federal friends across the way to help this province is that Ontario, which drives the engine of this country, does not yet have a federal manpower or personpower agreement with this province. You have not helped us whatsoever. Why is that? Because your friends in Ottawa have ordered that there be no settlement with this province or with this government in terms of helping newcomers, for newcomer settlement programs, for federal aid under legal aid and for personpower training; such a lack of responsibility by the federal government and by the leader of the official opposition.

You hear nothing about those three subject matters when it comes to the political realities of the day and federal-provincial relations. We see nothing coming from across the way except silence, like your 101 friends who are completely silent on these key subjects in the interests of this province.

Mr Curling: Let us go back to legal aid and some of the situations that exist right now in Ontario, under the Mike Harris government, the same government that cuts back and attacks the most vulnerable in our society. In legal aid, which we have before us today, the certificates have been cut by 50% since this government came into power, and they have the gall to sit here and talk about cutbacks. It's the same Mike Harris government that has wiped out employment equity and talks about giving service to the most vulnerable in our society, those who need access to jobs and opportunities, those who are qualified individuals.

In this situation, since they've been here, has the court system improved? Under their watch, many cases have been gone aside because of the delay of justice, so therefore, those are denied justice. Under this same watch, under this government here, we have seen people pleading guilty who are not guilty, because adequate support services in the courts and all around are not there. The police themselves need more money. They have the gall here to say, "We've got to look at what's happening outside." Look in your own home.

Look at the situation, when you talk about deficits and debt, that you still have. Look at who you exploit to get money. You take money from the poor and give it to the rich and then you say it is somebody else's responsibility.

It is your responsibility. It is your responsibility to look after the most vulnerable.

Now you're moving towards this situation of trying to correct this error here or improve on it. We hope you do better in this round.

The Acting Speaker: Summary from the Tory caucus? The member for Cambridge.

Mr Martiniuk: Rarely in this House is there the unanimity that this bill brings from all the parties about the need for reform of the legal aid system. I think we all agree on that. The terms and the methodology might be subject to some discussion, and I know we'll be having committee hearings on this. I look forward to the submissions of both the opposition and the third party and their comments in regard to the present bill.

I'd like to thank the member for Simcoe Centre for his comments on this bill. He has a distinguished law career and he speaks on the practical aspects of it, and I thank him for that. Of course, philosophically the comments of my friend from York-Mackenzie were well received and welcomed by all parts of the House, no doubt. I would also like to thank the member for St Catharines, whose comments I listened to closely, as I always do, and of course my old friend with whom I sat with on committee on many occasions, the member for Fort York. In addition, I was most pleased that there was an opportunity to hear from my friend the member for Scarborough North.

I thank all the speakers who addressed this bill and I look forward to the next three rounds which follow myself.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I think the parliamentary assistant, first of all, has identified the fact that there is some degree of consensus around the need for the updating, I would call it, of the legal aid plan in Ontario. That has to be done with a lot of legislation from time to time.

While he indicates clearly that there may be some points of divergence between the three parties, I don't think you'll find on this bill the kind of division that you might find on other legislation, because there is that recognition that you want, first of all, a very compassionate plan which meets the need of the low-income people in this province who don't have access to legal services that others might. At the same time, you want to have an efficient plan which is run in a businesslike fashion and which ensures that the dollars actually go into the kind of assistance that's required for those who don't have the financial wherewithal to deal with legal cases. I think if you looked around you'd say that's a goal that you would hope each of the parties would look to.

Legal aid has a history which, and I believe my recollection is correct, started under the Bill Davis government. There was a need out there that showed that people who didn't have high incomes didn't have the same access to the court system as others. An interesting study in the United States: If you look at the death penalty, for instance, in the United States, the people who usually end up on death row are people who don't have the money for good lawyers. Not all the time, but there's a propor-

tionate number of people from the low-income bracket who end up on death row compared to those who do not.

Obviously if you look at one of the celebrity cases, O.J. Simpson had a lot of money to spend on lawyers, and some other people have a lot of money to spend on lawyers. You don't usually find those people on death row. In fact, sometimes they are found to be not guilty by a court. They have access to the very best legal assistance. Those who were able to watch this trial, which was on television, saw that an individual who had a lot of money, who had a powerful position, was in a much better circumstance than individuals at the lower end of the income scale.

No one, regardless of where they happen to find themselves in the economic strata of society, has a right to commit crimes. Everybody agrees with that. You cannot use as an excuse one's background to commit a crime against other people. But I think what we do want to ensure is that we have a system in our province where people who don't have the financial resources and find themselves encountering the courts have a similar opportunity — I guess it will never be the same — to others to have appropriate representation in the cases with which they are dealing.

1620

If one were to knock on the doors of the Albany Club in Toronto, where we find a disproportionate number of wealthy Conservatives, one would find very few people there who would be in need of legal aid. They might well need the services of a lawyer at some time or other, but it's unlikely that they're going to need —

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): He's cruel.

Mr Bradley: Well, for some purpose, a house or something like that. I don't know why the member became exercised by that comment. Everybody at some time or other utilizes a lawyer. If it's a real estate transaction, if it's an accusation made, you're going to find people in any strata of society who are going to require legal services. But they are going to have the financial resources for those.

The parliamentary assistant appropriately points out that there is going to be a need for those in the lower-income brackets from time to time to have this financial assistance. They're not going to be able to hire the very best in the legal profession, but they should have representation. I think that brings about the kind of equality we want.

I was a bit concerned at some of the code words I heard. I call it a dog whistle. A dog whistle is a whistle which is blown so that only certain people can hear it. Those code words are used from time to time. If you use a certain allusion, it gets to the extent that "Maybe we don't want certain people in our country." There are other ways of wording it without saying it.

I know my friend from Brockville would not be the kind of person who would use those code words. He has been a member of this House for a long time. He's very blunt on many occasions. He doesn't have to use code words, because I can always understand what he's saying.

He's upfront with it, he's straightforward with it, and I appreciate that trait in him, though I may find myself in disagreement with him from time to time.

I wanted to look at some of the issues out there that confront people from lower-income brackets that may not confront the wealthiest people. I think that's why we have a system of this kind.

I notice that Dr Duncan Sinclair, who is the chairman of the Ontario Health Services Restructuring Commission — I call it the Ontario hospital closing commission; perhaps that's unfair, but certainly that's what they've been doing in many cases — was lamenting the fact that he had to access private health care here in Ontario and was able to do so because he had the money.

I'll quote from the Ottawa Citizen, an article by Tom Spears. Again it points out the difference, whether you have money in this province and the services you can get and whether you don't have the money.

"Dr Duncan Sinclair, chairman of the Ontario Health Services Restructuring Commission, learned first-hand what a difference private insurance makes when his back started to hurt.

"The treatment his doctor recommended was physiotherapy.

"His choice was to wait two or three months for the hospital to get around to it, or to go the very next day for electric acupuncture — something covered only by private insurance.

"He chose acupuncture. His back felt better the same day, but his moral sense felt worse.

"I worry very substantially about the growing inequity in Canada between people who are able to pay for private health insurance and those who can't," he said yesterday in Ottawa."

Here's a man who, as I say, is in Ontario. He's heading up the commission which is given the responsibility to restructure health; that means to close hospitals in the province, though I suspect, as we get closer to the election, there will be far fewer hospitals closed or restructured.

Even though we are assured that there's no political input in the process, my good friend from south Niagara was writing letters to the minister about this. I'm glad to see that, but I had heard all along from the previous minister and this minister that this had nothing to do with politics and that the commission was totally independent. I'm glad to see that he's joining me and others in the Niagara Peninsula in imploring the minister and imploring the commission not to do the dirty work of the Premier, which was to close hospitals in the province. I'm glad to see that but, boy, it contradicts what I keep hearing from both health ministers, that this commission is independent and there will be no political interference at all. So I'm glad to hear that there is going to be some persuasive influence that can be brought to bear on the Minister of Health and that my colleague from Niagara South is going to be joining me in that particular initiative.

Dr Sinclair goes on to say, "So there's a growing gap between the perception and the reality." That's when he's talking about the delivery of health care for people of

modest means. I think you can apply that to the legal system as well.

Now, we don't want abuses of it. I can't think of anybody in this House who wants to see any system that is funded by the taxpayers of this province abused. For instance, I suspect that when people see advertisements on television with the Premier in them, or other government advertisements, or they hear the commercials on the radio from the government of Ontario, paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario, or when they open a newspaper up and see advertisements, or when they open their mailbox up and find pamphlets, all paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario, they would probably say — and I know the taxpayers' coalition will lead this charge — this is an abuse of public funding, abuse of a system that is in the public domain. That's why they would be equally concerned if there were any abuses with the legal aid system.

I just find it passing interesting that this government seems to look for abuses that may exist where lower-income people are concerned, but when it's the people at the top end of the echelon, they look the other way. They are prepared to abuse taxpayers' dollars by squandering them on self-serving government advertising of the most blatant kind, but when it comes to some other area, where a person at the lower end of the echelon may benefit in some way or other, they are quick to be Sherlock Holmes and ferret that out and solve the problem.

I can assure the parliamentary assistant, who I thought was quite straightforward in the presentation he made, that all of us want to see any abuses removed. Our goal — surely all of us — is to have a legal aid system that gets the money that is required to have equal justice in this province to the people without too many intermediaries and in the most efficient fashion. I can't think of anybody who would disagree with that particular goal.

There have been two reports commissioned by this government that indicate serious shortcomings in the legal aid system. This bill only addresses one of the many recommendations that have come forward. That's fine; it does at least address one of them. But there are a number of recommendations that came forward that I think are deserving of the attention of the government.

The inability of low-income earners to access legal aid has been intensified by certain cuts in other areas. Let me give an example. The government has ended rent control. A lot of people in this province don't know that, because they haven't moved from their rental accommodation to this point in time. When they move, that apartment or that rental accommodation loses its status under rent control and the sky is the limit. Then the landlord may charge whatever the landlord wishes. That, of course, is going to impact upon people of more modest income than others.

I would say proportionately more people with lower incomes, particularly in communities outside of Metropolitan Toronto, tend to live in rental accommodation than others. That's simply a fact of life. They may not have the funds to be able to purchase accommodation and so are compelled to rent accommodation. Those people will get into disputes. Sometimes one side is right, sometimes the

other. One can be sympathetic from time to time with landlords who have tenants who are simply not prepared to pay and are bad tenants. I think everybody would be sympathetic with those people. On the other hand, there are tenants who are often victims, and they will need some assistance in dealing with the legal system.

It's important to know, where we see all these cuts, that these people who are unable to obtain funds in other ways are certainly more disadvantaged when they have to access the system known as the legal aid system.

There are a number of other justice issues out there that are of some importance. It's safe to say that lack of legal representation results in increased court appearances, for instance, and they add more delays to the system. When you don't have the appropriate counsel with you, the judge will often say, "We'll have to remand this case," so again we increase the backlog in the system and ultimately cost the system more money. Judges are put in the position of having to make decisions, as well, based on perhaps unreliable and possibly inaccurate information, because there may not be the kind of representation that's needed.

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I can think of a number of cases where the backlog is huge in the court system and has to be appropriately addressed. A recent survey by crown attorneys themselves found, for instance, that they have only five minutes with clients before they go to prosecute a case. The government, in terms of the legal system, has not fixed the family support system in this province. There are still millions upon millions of dollars owing, and in some cases you have the two ex-spouses both on the same side saying that the foul-ups are administrative.

The people who serve individual members of the Legislature do a fine job, but those who do not have access to that are still entangled in a system which is far from satisfactory and which doesn't have that regional component that people can get at.

I don't know, when the government was involved in the consultation on this, how they were able to do it before the Cornerstone Club met, because it's my understanding the Conservative Party is having — Bob is at a convention or a conference this weekend in Ottawa, and one component of it is the Cornerstone Club with its special access to the ministers. That must be a nuisance to my friend Bob Runciman, who has perhaps not had to experience that before, to have these people who pay \$500 to be a member of the Conservative Cornerstone Club and another \$325 to go to this special session with the ministers and the policy advisers. I hope Guy Giorno is there, because he's the most powerful person, next to the Premier himself, and I hope some of those advisers, the whiz kids, are there for them to get at. Otherwise they won't be getting their money's worth.

I hope that my friend from Scarborough Centre, Mr Newman, does not have to pay \$325 to get access to that session, because I was reading in Hansard what it said about that session, and that of course is where we find some consultation that this government does. My colleague John Gerretsen asked the question. He showed me

the memo. It was in italics so you couldn't miss it, and this was the advertisement for getting people to go to this session at \$325 a shot plus the \$500 for membership. It says:

"The important addition here is the day of workshops with ministers and policy staff prior to the annual meeting. This will give everyone an opportunity to participate in decisions."

I thought the caucus had some influence in those decisions, I thought the people of Ontario were to be consulted, and I find out it's members of the Cornerstone Club, this exclusive club for the wealthiest and most powerful people in the province to get together with the ministers.

I feel bad for the parliamentary assistant, because I don't know if they're going to invite him to this, and he's a person who I think should have some input into matters of this kind. He's a crime commissioner and he has some input in that direction. I always enjoy seeing him in action in that regard. I'm worried that he won't have the same kind of influence as perhaps those who are paying the \$325 to attend this session, with direct access to the policy advisers and to the ministers. This is before the rest of the crowd, before the mob descends on Ottawa, before the mob gets to the convention; there is this very special meeting.

There will be lots of people because of course they're lining up for those patronage jobs that you continue to dispense. What's interesting, I say to my friend from St George, is the conventions — did you ever notice? — tend to be larger when the party in power is having the conventions. I don't know why that is, but it always seems to be the case. Whatever party is in power, the convention seems to be the largest of all time.

Anyway, I want to say to my friend the parliamentary assistant that I think there will be some interesting discussion in committee. I hope there is some further input into the changes. This is a start. I think there's a consensus here that there will be support for the kind of changes we're going to see, and it's nice to see that kind of unanimity in this House for once.

Hon Mr Leach: You didn't mention Tom Long or Leslie Noble yet.

Mr Bradley: My friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing says to me that I should be mentioning Leslie Noble and Tom Long, because I guess he feels they have far more power than he has, and they do. I'm sorry to say that. They have far more power than he has. Even though he's duly elected and he's a member of the cabinet, he knows that Leslie Noble and Tom Long have more power. I'm glad he interjected that, because I had completely forgotten to introduce that.

Hon Mr Leach: What about Conrad? Did you get Conrad in yet?

Mr Bradley: I won't mention Conrad Black today. I don't have time for Conrad today.

I know that the government has limited resources because the Mulroney government, a number of years ago, began cutting the financing to provinces.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Then the Liberals came along and did it better.

Mr Bradley: I know my friends in the New Democratic Party and the Conservative Party will mention what happened after that, but I have to mention that it was the Mulroney government, and my friend from Hamilton Centre will remember Mike Harris applauding. "Cut more," he said. He was calling on the federal government: "Cut more. It's not enough."

Now, when he's approaching an election, he, like Lucien Bouchard — this must make my friend Bob Runciman just shudder, to think that Lucien Bouchard and Mike Harris are hand in hand fighting the federal government. My friends from the NDP, I don't know what you're ever going to do if the NDP forms the federal government. That will be a day of reckoning for somebody.

Anyway, I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I'm looking forward to further speeches.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Marchese: It's a pleasure to have two minutes again to respond to the comments the member for St Catharines has made, and there is some agreement with him on some of the comments he has made, and that is to say that providing three years' stable funding is important, providing legal aid for refugees for another two years — I'm not sure why they didn't do three, but at least two years is better than no support for refugees, who are very vulnerable people — is good. These are some of the poorest and most disadvantaged people we have in our province, so it's important obviously to find ways to better serve and protect them.

I was reminded about some of the comments the member for Simcoe Centre made, where he says, "We are dealing with low-income individuals who can't afford a private lawyer," and he was struggling to accomplish what Trudeau was doing many years ago, and that is to fight for a more just and fair society. I was taken by those remarks, because it makes it appear that somehow, all of a sudden, this government has made a U-turn to a government of good as opposed to a government of evil in the last three years. I was startled by this U-turn and wondered when it happened, if it happened, because in the last three years they've been whacking everybody over the head, including most recently talking about the homeless.

The Minister of Housing is here. We were arguing: "Please provide homes for the homeless, because that's what they need. If we can't deal with that fundamental issue, we can't deal with other problems they might have, issues of substance abuse or mental illness and the like. They need a home before we can even treat those other issues." We urged this government to do something and they said no. Their response, in my view, has been very pitiful, so the fact they're looking for a just society pleases me.

Mr Tascona: I'm pleased to respond to the member for St Catharines on this Bill 68 on the legal aid system. The member for St Catharines says that taxpayers do not want to see any system abused. He goes on and cites, in par-

ticular, abuses to the legal aid system. Conveniently he fails to mention the biggest abusers to the legal aid system are his own federal cousins, the federal government abuse. Let's see how they've abused it.

The federal government has dramatically reduced its funding over the past several years. Federal funding for immigration and refugee cases has declined from \$14.4 million in 1991-92 to an estimated \$3.8 million in 1997-98. The federal share of funding for immigration and refugee legal aid services has decreased from 46% in 1991-92 to approximately 23% in 1997-98. We all know, with the federal commitment to Ontario and our programs, we'll see that go down even further, an even further abuse by the federal government.

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The federal government, as everyone should know, is responsible for the Immigration and Refugee Board. That is their pivotal responsibility. They are responsible for immigration in this country. I say to the member for St Catharines, why should Ontario fund the federal immigration system? I put that to the member for St Catharines very succinctly and I hope he understands the question: What is his party's position on the federal government's abuse of the legal aid system? I've given him the facts. He should understand that they are not living up to their commitment. Even though they are responsible for immigration and responsible to look after the needy, they're not doing it. I would say to the member, what is his response? What is his party's position on the abuse by the federal government of the legal aid system? I'd like to hear that.

Mr Curling: I just wanted to make some comments in regard to my colleague from St Catharines, who put the case so eloquently and, what's most important, tried to focus and bring the issue right back where it belongs. As a matter of fact, he commended the government for bringing forth this bill, but he also said that there is a responsibility that must be borne by the present government, acknowledging the fact that they are the ones who have cut back on all the certificates, about 50% of the certificates issued to legal aid people at the time, and did not fund it properly in itself.

Who suffered in the process? Those who need it most. My colleague was trying to say that we fully agree that abuse in the system should be taken out, of course, but while you're taking that out, make sure that those in need get the service.

If there is one area that needs to be addressed and done properly, it's the area of legal aid, because mostly the poor are the ones who have no access to a good legal system. The reason? It is so costly. It is a very costly affair to address a legal position. Lawyers are costly. The court system is rather costly. It's very costly for those individuals who take time off from their work to address the courts. So as he said, we must clean up the system and get rid of all the abuse.

As he has also pointed out, the Conservative government of the day in the province doesn't seem to like refugees, those people who need the legal system to work for them, to work for everyone.

I want to commend him for the very pointed way in which he puts his case.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I'm pleased to respond to the comments of the member for St Catharines. As usual, given his eloquence and experience, one could say just about anything and probably tie into some aspect of his speech. I say that with great respect and in a complimentary fashion as a tribute to the vast experience that indeed you have had.

Certainly I think it's worth emphasizing, as the member has, that what we're really talking about is deciding the governance of a plan, as opposed to many of the major changes. There are some changes, and we do have some concerns. Although we accept the legislation in principle, we'll raise those concerns. In fact, my colleague from London Centre is the next speaker and she'll be raising some of those concerns that we have.

By and large, the issue is, how are we going to govern the legal aid plan? I, like many of my colleagues, don't believe there's any one particular governance model that fits all. Quite frankly, some governance ought to be under the direct purview of a minister of the crown; there are some matters of public policy that ought to be in the hands of stakeholders, as we have had since the 1950s, in terms of the legal aid plan; some ought to be arm's length, as we're moving to here; and somebody hang on to Bob Runciman, because I'm also going to say that in some cases there ought to be private governance of matters.

I believe that what really matters is the democratic debate and openness around the decision-making of what the governance is and ensuring there aren't rules such as the transition board concerns we have about appointments and how these people get their power, as opposed to the actual model itself.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for St Catharines has two minutes to respond.

Mr Bradley: I always appreciate the comments of members, in this case from Fort York, Hamilton Centre, Scarborough North and Simcoe Centre.

I'm going to touch for a moment on what the member for Hamilton Centre said and how that input is required from people who both receive and are directly involved in the legal aid system.

I kept getting a question from the member for Simcoe Centre, and I thought it would revolve around labour negotiations and the development of labour policies in the province. I can well recall his circumstance where he was involved in developing labour policy for this province. Also, as a member of the legal profession, I think he was on a retainer for a company, wasn't he? I could be wrong on that. He'll correct me, I'm sure, with a point of privilege, but it seemed to me that while you were developing a policy related to labour, the member for Simcoe Centre was on a retainer for a company that was promoting this change, I guess, and opposing what the NDP had done. I thought he might deal with that. He didn't have time. I'm sure if he'd had more time, he would have done so.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Simcoe Centre.

Mr Tascona: I don't know what the member for St Catharines is alluding to. Certainly this was dealt with by the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and there was nothing untoward found that I did as a lawyer. He's aware of that. It was provided in the Integrity Commissioner's report. It was provided to all of the members. He knows the facts and I think he owes me an apology.

Mr Bradley: Larry Grossman, a former member of this House, used to talk about people and he would say, "They're good pitchers and bad catchers." I think sometimes that's —

Mr Tascona: The member is alleging he doesn't understand what he just said. He's fully aware of the circumstances. I think he owes me an apology. I'd like a ruling.

The Deputy Speaker: A moment, please. I'm unclear whether the member for Simcoe Centre was rising on a point of order —

Mr Tascona: Privilege.

The Deputy Speaker: — or privilege. I'll assume that it was privilege, and in that respect, I have no way of compelling a member to apologize.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Transportation): Tell him to say it outside.

The Deputy Speaker: If the member wants to, he will, but I would like to proceed.

Mr Tascona: If the member wants to go outside and suggest what he's trying to suggest in the House here with respect to that, I welcome him to go outside. He wouldn't have the guts to go outside, because he knows what happened. He is basically saying things that he knows aren't true.

The Deputy Speaker: I would ask you to withdraw that comment.

Mr Tascona: What would you like me to withdraw, Mr Speaker? That he's not presenting the facts as they are?

The Deputy Speaker: I'd like you to withdraw the comment.

Mr Tascona: Quite frankly, Mr Speaker —

The Deputy Speaker: No. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr Tascona: I withdraw, but I don't want to hear any more from the member on that.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. There can be only one person standing in the House at a time, so when I'm standing, that is the one.

The other thing I want to be very clear about is that when a person stands when someone else is, it's either on a point of privilege or a point of order, and I have to be able to hear at the beginning which it is so that I can address my thinking towards that. I just wanted to remind the members of that.

The Chair recognizes the member for St Catharines.

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Mr Bradley: Before the member bounces up again, I would never want to say anything that —

The Deputy Speaker: I'm sorry. Why is the member for St Catharines standing?

Mr Bradley: I'm on a point of privilege. I would never want to say anything that would offend the member for Simcoe East. Certainly I do not want to do that to him. I would never do that to any member of this House. I certainly accept his explanation to the House and his comments to the House.

Mr Tascona: Just a point: I'm the member for Simcoe Centre. I want to make sure the member for Simcoe East is not —

Mr Bradley: I'm sorry: Simcoe Centre.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Boyd: Mr Speaker, before I start, I'd like consent for our party to delay the speech by the critic and to proceed with —

The Deputy Speaker: It's my understanding that that has already been given.

Mrs Boyd: Thank you very much. That's good.

It's maybe a quaint sort of notion, but I'd like us to get back to talking about this bill, because it's a very important action we're taking in changing the legal aid services for the province of Ontario. It's very important because there are obligations on the government to ensure that all people in this province have access to legal services, and legal aid is an extremely important part of that, particularly for those who are unable to afford a lawyer of their own.

I must say that I'm very pleased that the work that has gone forward over the last five years in looking at the legal aid system, in looking at the problems that have been experienced in the previous 25 years since it was instituted in the province of Ontario, has gone on apace and that we are at a point where we are looking at some changes around the way we deliver services. It was quite apparent to us some years ago when we were in government and apparent to those who were working in the legal profession and those who were receiving legal aid services that although every conceivable effort appeared to be being made to ensure that those services were provided equitably and that the management of those services was being done, there were many indications that the system was not working particularly well.

One of the things that is very real about the system, as has been mentioned by a number of other folks, is that given the federal government's stake in ensuring that people are appropriately represented before a criminal trial, legal aid was set up as a shared-cost program between the federal government and the provincial government. Like many other shared-cost programs, what we saw, first with the Mulroney government, then with the Chrétien government, was an erosion of that cost-sharing to the point where, in 1993, when I became Attorney General, the cost-share was about 7% for the federal government and the rest for the provincial government, and now I understand from officials in the Ministry of the Attorney General that it has eroded even further, lower than 5%.

We ought to be concerned about that kind of erosion, and it is a factor in legal aid, because when legal aid began in this province, it was an open-ended program. The

assumption was that the federal government and the provincial government would share the costs that were required for the necessity of legal representation for those who were eligible for the program who couldn't afford to pay for that program themselves.

It became very clear, as those costs escalated and escalated and the federal government's share eroded and eroded, that something had to be done. So we had a major discussion with the law society in 1993-94 around what to do about this program: How could we manage to continue to ensure that there was appropriate access to legal services and yet protect the budget of the province of Ontario, given that this cost-sharing was no longer the case?

That was a very painful discussion, I can tell you. I bear a lot of the wounds, and indeed there are members of the bar out there who probably consider the action of our government in capping legal aid funding as a very serious cut at access to justice. But we believed very strongly that we needed to do that, that we needed to at least put a limit on the amount of money and then to require the management of that program to look at that cap and try and deliver more effectively and efficiently the services.

At the same time, we realized that the management of the program by the law society was, to put it mildly, somewhat less than the best management style in the world. I know that when I, as Attorney General, would ask for current figures as to where the fund was while we were talking about the funding of the plan, we could never get up-to-date figures. Everything was always a guesstimate based on the last quarter, that sort of thing. There was no way to look at how the flow of certificates would come through. That continues to be a bit of a problem, because you're granted a certificate but very often the account doesn't come in until many months down the road. That is a management difficulty that needed to be done. But we also discovered that the kind of technological aids that could be there did not seem to be in place through the legal aid committee and the law society management and we developed some very real concerns about the management of that.

As a result, there was a lot of negotiation with the law society around how to improve those processes, how to get those processes more streamlined: How could we ensure that that information was coming forward, and how could we, within the cap that had been set on legal aid funds — and I must make it very clear that it was still a very substantial amount of money, certainly compared to other provinces, but very much in keeping with the kind of longitudinal experience of need. It was never satisfactory to those who would like to see completely open access, but at least, with the very fine offices of the committee on legal aid with the law society, we managed to come to some agreement about that.

I think it's fair to say that we were also feeling the breath of fire on our backs. The Common Sense Revolution document had already come out, and the Conservatives, reflecting a belief that legal aid was somehow some kind of free ride for special interest groups, were threatening quite substantially in that document to reduce

the amount of funding going to legal aid. Certainly we knew that it was important, very important, for a program like legal aid to be able to show that it was extremely businesslike, that the public that was to be served by legal aid understood what the eligibility rules were, that there was reason in the system, that people weren't arbitrarily being refused access to legal aid and that we could defend that kind of a process.

It was appropriate that this government, when it took power, first of all decided not to reduce the funding to legal aid, which was a great relief to those who are providing legal services in clinics, and to the bar, but certainly to anybody concerned about access to legal services that was a relief. It was also something we could definitely support when Professor McCamus was asked to look at the whole system, to make recommendations for a new way of delivering the services.

The law society, both during our term in office and with the new government, was clearly indicating that it thought it was not in the best interests of the program or in the best interests of the law society to continue to administer that program, but the necessity was to try and figure out a mechanism that would ensure that access to legal services did not depend on any favour of any particular political party, that access to legal services was done in an even-handed way. The recommendations, by and large, that Professor McCamus made as a result of that in-depth study are represented in Bill 68.

1700

We have real concerns about the kind of influence on policy and on decision-making that is inherent in the selection of the corporate board of directors. This is the biggest single concern we have with the bill. While the government has agreed that no more than half of this group can be lawyers and while the bill clearly talks about geographic representation — subsection 5(5) says that the Attorney General will ensure that geographic diversity is represented in terms of selections — we still have some concerns about the ability of that board to reflect very clearly the public interest in the province.

Subsection 5(4) in the act clearly talks about the different skills that are needed. One of those skills, very clearly, is “the special legal needs of and the provision of legal services to low-income individuals and disadvantaged communities.” That gives some comfort, as does number 5: “The social and economic circumstances associated with the special legal needs of low-income individuals and of disadvantaged communities,” are also to be represented on that board.

So we have concerns about the selection process, concerns about whether in the long run that board is going to be representative enough of the actual needs of those receiving the services. But we are somewhat comforted that those requirements are actually built into the act, that those requirements are not requirements that are simply articulated as policy.

It's important to realize that the legal aid committee of the law society was of course predominantly lawyers. There were lay members of that committee, some ap-

pointed out of the benchers of the law society and some appointed by the Attorney General of the day, but they were by no means in the same proportion as they are going to be on the corporate board of directors. That is some comfort and looks like some improvement in that oversight.

But — there's a big “but” here — the transition board, the board that the Attorney General is going to recommend and that will be appointed by the Lieutenant in Council, by the cabinet, has no such restrictions upon it. This can be anyone, hand-chosen. The transition board itself is going to actually set up the corporation, set its organizational structure, make determination about the emphasis it puts on the various pieces of programs and is going to be extremely important in the set-up of this whole plan, and that is of real concern. Although I agree absolutely that there needs to be some transition, to have no restrictions on that transitional board that ensure that some of that transition is carried out by people who do understand “the special legal needs of and the provision of legal services to low-income individuals and disadvantaged communities” strikes me as very odd. I would say to the Attorney General that it is going to be extremely important, if he is to maintain the integrity of this corporation, that that transitional board be carefully selected to represent some of those special needs.

There is one part of the bill that I am very pleased to see here, and that is the part that talks about the legal aid services that will be delivered. This has always been a big issue. What balance will there be in legal services that are offered? Because the federal criminal law — the Criminal Code and the Young Offenders Act — clearly talks about appropriate representation for people who are faced with the possibility of jail, and, for young offenders, the requirement in the Young Offenders Act for children to be represented, the criminal part of the plan has always been seen to have the greatest urgency. But there are issues of family law, there are issues of what we had always called poverty law in the past and which the bill calls clinic law, and issues around mental health law that had an equal urgency for the people facing the need for representation in those areas.

So I am pleased that section 13 of the act clearly states, “The corporation shall provide” — in other words, it must provide — “legal aid services in the areas of criminal law, family law, clinic law and mental health law.” That gives some guarantee that there is actually the legislative authority to put emphasis on all those areas.

It's quite clear that the transitional board in the first instance, and then the corporate board of directors, will be making the decision about the weight that's put on those various areas. I would hope that the weight would be placed very clearly with respect to need in terms of the urgency of the well-being of those seeking that representation.

Much has been said in the long discussions, the five-year discussions about changes in the system, about where that emphasis should lie. I am pleased to see that there is a protection of those services that are defined as clinic law,

the services to people who require landlord-tenant services, the people who require assistance with the Social Assistance Review Board, people who need representation in various areas of administrative law and civil law, in which those who are on low income are particularly vulnerable in their need for representation. I'm pleased to see that here.

I am worried, of course, that there's only guaranteed funding for the existing legal aid clinics and that that funding is only guaranteed for a period of three years. I'm sure that if the government goes forward with hearings it will hear some concerns, not only from the legal clinic people themselves, the boards of directors of those legal clinics, the staff of those legal clinics, but from many of the groups that have been served by those clinics, about the need to really ensure that those services continue to be offered. Of course that permission is here in the act that clinic services now are seen as an integral part of that.

I'm particularly pleased to see that the corporation must provide representation in the mental health process. There are many parts of the Mental Health Act that require individuals who are suffering various levels of illness to appear at hearings, particularly if they're being committed involuntarily. Just as an imprisonment in the criminal system is an important area where people need to have representation to protect them, given that their freedom may be curtailed and given that the Charter of Rights guarantees us that our freedom will only be curtailed if due process has been followed, it's extremely important for that representation to be available to those very vulnerable people who are undergoing the involuntary committal process. If the government goes ahead with some of its mental health reform ideas, that will be even more important than ever. We are going to be finding a whole different class of hearings if the government moves ahead with the ideas it seems to have on community committal orders.

One of the essential aspects of the provision of legal services to those who do not have personal resources to pay for them is that our law is based on an adversarial system, based on a balance between one position and another. We already know that those who can purchase high-powered legal assistance often are advantaged in the system, and it is extremely important that our legal aid system compensate lawyers and other service-providers appropriately so that those who require legal aid can be sure that the talent and the skill is going to be there to balance out our system.

There have been many instances in the past when we know lawyers have found it difficult to continue their support of the legal aid plan because of the impact it would have on their living, their ability to look after their family. It will be important for us all to monitor this corporation to ensure the compensation rates are adequate to ensure balance within the legal system.

1710

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I'm pleased to have this opportunity to comment on the remarks of the honour-

able member for London Centre and to thank her for confining her remarks to the substance of the bill, the matter that is before us this afternoon. I want to note that she, in contrast to at least one other speaker earlier today, did not take the opportunity to engage in unsubstantiated innuendo or personal cheap shots aimed at other members of this House, and delivered quite a thorough and well-studied dissertation on the subject of the bill that we are here to consider this afternoon.

I was pleased that the honourable member discussed the work done by Professor McCamus in association with the Attorney General in reviewing the state of legal aid in this province today, in coming forward with some very substantial and valuable recommendations for reforming a system that has been pretty much unchanged for 30-some-odd years.

The bill that is before us will certainly bring forward the legal aid plan to better meet the needs of Ontarians who require legal aid services. The number of ways in which that is accomplished was touched on quite eloquently by the member. The member noted, for example, that the legislation would establish the mandate, governance, accountability, services and funding for a new organization, which will be called Legal Aid Ontario, a body that would be independent of the government, independent of the Attorney General and independent of the Law Society of Upper Canada. It would exist for the purpose of administering and serving the needs of the legal aid system. That's a very important point to have made.

Mr Bradley: Over and above the legal aid system we have, where you have lawyers who have been paid, who have been retained as counsel and have been paid to defend people in the system, another portion of legal assistance which is extremely valuable is provided by the legal assistance clinics in each of our communities. Right now, unfortunately — this is a result of many factors — members would know that in our communities they tend to be understaffed and overworked. They deal with a lot of matters that affect people who are at the low end of the income scale and are unable to fend for themselves in many circumstances. The people who work in these legal aid clinics deserve support from those of us who are in the Legislative Assembly, and credit for taking on cases that many other people may not want to take on.

They do two things. One thing they do which is extremely effective for everyone is to provide what I think the lawyers in the House could tell me is summary advice to people, free legal advice which is not very complicated, but if a person were to go down to make an appointment and ask for some legal advice, they would provide that advice to them. Normally, those people don't have access to members of the legal profession. They may not want to go through the trouble it takes to obtain counsel. The matter may be relatively insignificant to the world as a whole, but to that person, very important. When we are looking at the funding of various offices, that would be very useful.

The other is the worker adviser. In our area, in the Niagara Peninsula, we're worried that once again we're

going to see further cuts in the worker adviser office, which assists people particularly with matters related to what we used to call the Workers' Compensation Board. Those certainly should be given consideration as well.

Mr Christopherson: I'm pleased to respond to the comments of my colleague from London Centre once again today. I would like to first underscore her comment that no matter how hard we try, there really is a difference in terms of the justice you get whether you're a rich person or not.

There's a clear American example that I think comes to mind to anyone who's watching this, but the best Canadian example I can think of was a case where a citizen felt seriously wronged by the federal government — not an unusual thing to happen to a lot of Canadians, but in this case the particular Canadian I believe is a millionaire and has access to the best kind of legal help money can buy, and he beat the federal government. That was former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.

How many other Canadians would have the means and the contacts to mount the kind of campaign and legal defence that was necessary to take on and defeat the federal government? I realize we can say that there were serious allegations against him, but I can tell you there are an awful lot of people who feel, when the federal government's coming at them, that these are serious allegations also. So there is a difference. The fundamental need of legal aid is clearly there for anyone who cares to and try to rectify the basic injustices that can be built in and are built in.

The other major concern I want to mention in the few moments I have left is the transition board and the fact that there were so many groups that lobbied to have a description of the qualifications people should have for being on the permanent board, yet all that is waived with the transition board. There's no requirement that they meet those requirements, yet they will set a lot of the initial standards that will have long-term impacts on the board. This is a very serious concern we have.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for London Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mrs Boyd: I want to thank the members who spoke: the member for York East, the member for St Catharines and the member for Hamilton Centre.

I am very touched by what the member for St Catharines said in terms of the scope of the services that can be offered. It's important to articulate that the scope of services that can be offered is quite broad in this act.

It authorizes legal aid certificates to the judiciary system we've had in the past. It authorizes service-providers by means of certificates to provide legal services, and that of course opens the door to paralegals of all sorts who will be able to provide services in the system. The funding of clinics, the establishment and operation of legal services and staffed offices, is another area where there has certainly been some controversy on the part of the bar to the appropriateness of staffed offices. I'm assured by the staff from the Ministry of the Attorney General that the couple of pilot projects that are running will be evaluated before

there's much expansion of that, to see whether that is in an effective and efficient way of providing services.

There is the funding of student legal aid services, the funding of aboriginal legal aid services and the provision of duty counsel. There is public legal education, an extremely important aspect of this to educate the public about how our system works and what their place and their responsibility is within the system. There is assistance to individuals who represent themselves, so that we see some of the difficulty that our justices talk to us about in trying to ensure that justice is even-handed when someone is not represented by legal counsel. Also, there is the authorization of alternative dispute resolution systems; that's extremely important to try and ease the kind of adversarial situation we often find in our legal services.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): It's a pleasure to get an opportunity to speak on Bill C — Bill 68, the Legal Aid Act. That's almost a Freudian slip. I'm humbled to be in the presence tonight of several members of the bar, a former Attorney General and the crime commissioners as I offer some comments. My comments will probably be a little more of a non-technical nature, but I will try to stay true to the rule in this House that we periodically at least refer to the piece of legislation we are discussing. I would never dare to compare myself in eloquence to the member for St Catharines; however, I may at times find myself drifting a touch away from the subject and hope that you would allow me, Mr Speaker, to come back to the subject and address it, as is the norm.

1720

It's very interesting in the Legislature to see debate on a piece of legislation where there is roughly unanimous consent. It strikes me that it is somewhat of a miscarriage of our process here to spend a lot of time in front of some TV cameras basically all agreeing with a piece of legislation when probably that same legislation should be before a committee, where we have a chance to hear input from other concerned citizens and get an opportunity to get into the nuts and bolts and the meat of it. So it's interesting to be here and to hear the general consensus by people of all sides that this is good legislation.

If you would indulge me, I'd like to put this particular bill and the need for it in the context of the bigger picture, as we look at the fact that from I believe 1989 to 1994 the bill for legal aid in Ontario doubled to somewhere in the vicinity of \$230 million, and quite frankly, had there not been some serious interventions by the provincial government, that amount would have probably escalated, gone unchecked, and goodness knows where it might have gotten to by now. Suffice it to say that in that period of 1989 to 1994, the bill for legal aid services doubled in the province of Ontario.

During that same period of time and a little bit prior to that and maybe a little bit after that, but roughly in that same period of time, we had several things happening simultaneously in Ontario that tie in with this general attitude that the government could do everything for everybody at any cost; the cost didn't make any differ-

ence. We had a time there during that particular time, 1989 to 1994, when welfare rates in the province, the amount of money we paid people who were trapped on welfare, skyrocketed. It went to the point where we had by far the highest welfare rates, substantially — 25% or 30% — above the average of other provinces in the country during that same period of time when the money spent on legal aid doubled.

During that same period of time from 1990 to 1995, the accumulated debt in this province tripled, to the point where in 1995 the taxpayers of the province of Ontario had accumulated — or the government, actually, had accumulated on their behalf — \$100 billion worth of debt. During that same time when spending on legal aid doubled, the debt of the province tripled to \$100 billion and it was escalating at a rate that defied understanding. We were spending, in 1995, \$1.2 million every hour in excess of what our revenues were. That was the legacy that Ontario found itself in in 1995.

We also had a situation where it had gotten to the point where in this great province of Ontario, arguably the finest, most productive, richest area of the world, we had one out of every eight people trapped in the welfare system. That was all taking place during that time when the debt tripled to \$100 billion, when the money spent on legal aid doubled to \$230 million. We found that we had one out of every eight people in this great province trapped on the welfare system. The relevance is that that ratio was even higher than the ratio of the people in Newfoundland, who we all know have undergone several serious economic crises as a result of federal policies.

During that same period of time, when the cost of providing legal aid doubled to \$230 million, the province lost 10,000 jobs. Here we had this situation of increasing debt, more people on welfare, jobs being lost, higher welfare rates and more money spent on legal aid. During that same period in time there was an issue that's very dear to my heart, the issue of homelessness. The number of homeless people in the city of Toronto using emergency shelters during that period from 1985 to 1995 — when welfare rates skyrocketed as far as dollars per month, and we were building social housing at a dizzying rate — the number of people using emergency shelters in the city of Toronto doubled. That was the context in which all of those things were happening in the province during what we often refer to as the 10 lost years.

Since that time, of course, there's been quite a change in the fortunes of the province. But one has to stop and say: "What was the attitude that was there, that caused us to get ourselves into all of that mess? What kind of a spirit did we have that created this atmosphere of, 'The government can do everything for everybody'?" How did we let ourselves get to the point where personal accountability and personal responsibility were put on the backbench in favour of, 'Let's let the government do it'?"

I don't know how we got there, but boy, it just about destroyed this great province of ours. We've had a change in that since, and we've had a change now to the point where people are saying: "No, I want to be accountable

for myself. Just give me some help. That's all I want, and I can be accountable for myself."

What a wonderful change that has been. We know in the last three years we've gotten about 320,000 fewer people trapped on welfare, we've got over 360,000, upwards of 400,000, new jobs in the province, so a lot of good things have happened since that period during which legal aid about doubled in the province.

I would not have raised the subject of homelessness, except the member for Fort York raised it in some comments that he made. I think it would be appropriate at this time to make a couple of comments about that issue, because there are some things that we can do to improve that, just as there are some things that we can do and we are doing with Bill 68 to improve the issue of legal aid and all the people on all sides agree with that.

I think there are some things we can do and I'm heartened to see that some key people in the city of Toronto have said, "Yes, we're going to do some things." As you may know, I had an opportunity to be on TV the other night with Jack Layton, one of Toronto's more august —

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair recognizes the member for London Centre on a point of order.

Mr Boyd: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe that the rules require us to speak to the bill, Bill 68, and the member does not appear to be doing that.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of order. I've been listening carefully to the member and he's bringing his terms within it. I will check carefully.

Mr Carroll: There is no question there is a tie-in between all of these issues because they all involve the government providing services to people who find themselves in need of those services. These issues are all tied together. They all deal with government services. They deal with soft services. They deal with the government being in a position to help people who find themselves in need of that help. Homelessness ties in with the whole issue of welfare, and it ties in with the issue of legal aid.

I just want to reassure people, especially those people at home watching TV that night. Mr Layton confirmed for us that the city of Toronto next year will address the issue that currently in their property tax rate for multi-residential, in other words, apartment buildings — they charge four and a half times the rate they do on single residential. Mr Layton confirmed on TV that night that they're going to fix that issue.

He also confirmed that night that the 106 properties the city of Toronto currently owns, the houses and apartment buildings that are sitting empty, that within two weeks those places that are owned by the city and sitting empty would house homeless people.

I think we should all congratulate Mr Layton and his personal commitment to have the city of Toronto make some profound change in those areas.

1730

Applause.

Mr Carroll: I think it's worthy of some applause. I really do believe that.

There's some talk in the bill about the whole issue of the federal government and their role relative to sponsored immigrants and refugees. This is an area where the federal government, in my personal opinion, has totally abandoned their responsibility. At any one time in this province there are approximately 20,000 failed immigrant sponsorships. There are roughly 10,000 people at any one time in this province awaiting clarification of their refugee status. This is a responsibility of the federal government. However, they have abandoned this responsibility and the enormous costs associated with that.

We're talking about people who just want their determination settled. They want to become hard-working members of our society. They just need the federal government to make some decisions on their behalf. The federal government is very slow in doing that and, as a result, they're in limbo. The federal government has abandoned their responsibility in this area and it's good to see that while we are not going to abandon those people immediately, we certainly are going to call upon the federal government to step up and be counted, as they certainly should.

The bill provides Legal Aid Ontario — which is something I was delighted to see in the bill, and I'm going to just read from a note here — with the flexibility to use a variety of service delivery methods, including certificates, community clinics, staff offices, student legal aid societies, aboriginal legal services corporations, duty counsel, public legal education, assisted self-representation and alternative dispute resolution.

The last one of those, alternative dispute resolution, has been proven time and time again as a cost-effective way of quickly resolving disputes and keeping them out of the system. So it's great to see that it is specifically referenced.

The other one that is interesting to see specifically referenced is the area of community clinics. I'm going to read from the act where it defines what the responsibility of the community legal aid clinic will be if it is to receive funding, because I think it's very important that we understand precisely what the role of the community legal aid clinic is in the whole process of legal aid. I'm not so sure that it has always been well understood. I quote from subsection 33(1):

"The corporation" — the corporation being, of course, the legal aid corporation — "may provide funding to a clinic to enable the clinic to provide legal aid services to low-income individuals or disadvantaged communities."

I think it's very good that the act clarifies what the role of legal aid clinics will be in the future.

I have pretty well exhausted the comments I wanted to make on the bill. I think it suffices to say that there are some things that have been mentioned by the opposition in the way of housekeeping issues that need to be resolved.

It is appropriate that the bill get some time in committee. I hope, since there is agreement in general in the House on the intention of the bill to provide a more accountable, less costly, more efficient legal aid system for Ontario, we can move forward with the legislation

very quickly and get it to committee so that we can get this bill proclaimed, should it pass, and get it into practice so the people who avail themselves of legal aid services can continue to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Curling: I think the member for Chatham-Kent was about to get around to why it is that legal aid is so much needed. While the member for London Centre pointed out that he wasn't quite focused on speaking to the bill, I think what he didn't say, or was about to say, or in the five minutes he had left he could have said, is a couple of things with regard to homelessness. It was his government that cut out rent control and had rents skyrocket, depleting the disposable income of individuals to fund larger rent increases that they would have to pay for. That contributes to homelessness. They may also find themselves getting lawyers and legal aid because they have less funds with which to fight their case in court. That is why there is an importance to legal aid itself for those who are more vulnerable.

He also forgets to mention the cause of homelessness. There is the 22% cut by his government to those on welfare, the size of that cut. If they would just take a moment and realize, if they personally had 22% cut from their income, how devastated they would be to find out what they would then have to sacrifice. Many people who were most vulnerable would find themselves having to cut back either on food or accommodation, and eventually maybe find themselves homeless.

He speaks about how the bill will assist the people who are more vulnerable. They need it more than any other time. He also forgets that it was his government that started the deinstitutionalization of people in institutions.

Mrs Boyd: I'm pleased to comment on the speech from the member for Chatham-Kent. I'm surprised he didn't continue for his full time because he certainly didn't touch very much on the bill during the time he was speaking. I was hoping he was going to talk about some of the necessity for legal aid services for low-income people in his own community. Certainly I'm aware of the need that exists there, of the number of vulnerable women and their children who are forced to flee their homes because of violence and are forced to look for assistance, both from the criminal courts in terms of abuse and from the civil courts for family law, and how often it is difficult for people to get that kind of representation in his community. I was really hoping he was going to do that.

The other thing that interests me is the pride with which the member talks about this bill having the support of all sides of the House, and then tells us that it's going out to committee. It's one of those interesting phenomena that we observe with this government, that when, generally speaking, consensus has been built on a piece of legislation, through the kind of work Professor McCamus did and so on, they suddenly decide then they have to consult further by going out to committee, whereas when things are highly controversial, things like Bill 31, which took away the rights of workers, they refuse to go out to com-

mittee. In fact, they make sure that the bill gets shoved through here without any changes.

This particular piece of legislation does have relatively broad consensus. There are some items of concern. They could be dealt with in committee of the whole. Instead of that, the government has decided to tie up the justice committee yet again so they can't consider Ipperwash.

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): As someone who has represented individuals on legal aid certificates, I can tell you that Bill 68, the Legal Aid Services Act, 1998, goes a long way in providing the kind of change that is needed under our legal aid system. Most of the speakers have outlined the items in the bill. I would just throw in some practical aspects that this bill will allow Legal Aid Ontario to implement.

For example, I represented young offenders under the Young Offenders Act in juvenile court. Often, because the Young Offenders Act requires legal representation to be appointed by court, sometimes you would have a game whereby the young offender would go out and apply for legal aid. Legal aid would be denied. The young offender would walk into court and the judge would make an order for representation. The young offender would go out and legal aid would be provided.

What this bill will allow is a specialized system whereby Legal Aid Ontario could establish a panel, could establish a system or a clinic just to deal with young offenders, or a system of a public defender's office to deal with such cases. That can happen in other aspects of law, such as mental health law. Presently we have a lot of problems in helping people under the Mental Health Act, and maybe a specialized panel will go a long way in assisting that. Legal Aid Ontario will be able to implement such programs that will assist and end up saving money for Ontario taxpayers.

1740

Mr Bradley: I want to comment because there was a reference made to going to committee, and I want to make reference to both the members who spoke, the member for Chatham-Kent and the member for London Centre, because I find it passing strange, as my friend the House leader of the NDP would, that on bills where there seems to be a consensus we go to committee. If the bill has some degree of popularity, the government wishes to troop it around the province so they can bring in their supporters and others to say good things about it, if there's a consensus that it's unlikely there are going to be too many people out there who are going to have something negative to say. So I implore my good friend from Chatham-Kent to prevail upon the government House leader, probably more so the Premier and his staff because they ultimately make all the decisions, to speak to them to try to persuade them to have other bills that are more contentious go out to committee and around the province so we can hear on them.

I'm not going to quarrel with him on this bill. I think some of the points he has made are quite valid. He has mentioned the consensus that exists among all of us, and I'm glad it has been reiterated that there are a variety of services that can be provided, that it's not simply some-

body going into a lawyer's office with a certificate, but there are a variety of services that are out there to assist people. Those who are at the bottom end of the economic scale often simply don't know who to go to. They often come to us as representatives and we are sometimes in the position of directing them to the appropriate agency. What's difficult is if that agency has a huge backlog you feel very bad about not being able to find someone else who could possibly represent them in certain legal circumstances.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Chatham-Kent has two minutes to respond.

Mr Carroll: I appreciate the comments. To the member for Scarborough North, I know you share my concern for the homeless, and maybe you might help us to lobby your federal members on the issue of the GST. As you know, I'm sure, the GST on rentals is 8% and on home ownership it's only 4%. Maybe you can help us lobby the feds on that so we can build some more affordable housing.

To the member for London Centre, I too am concerned about the provision of legal aid services in my community. I might just remind her that unfortunately the whole issue of abuse against women is an ugly blight on our society, but it doesn't just happen to poor women. It's an issue that happens to too many women if it happens to even one. Some of them require some legal aid and some don't, and I believe those services should be available for all of them. I think it's a terrible thing this should happen.

It's interesting to hear her talk about the committee issue. Do we or don't we go to committee? She talked about going to committee of the whole House. I can remember a situation in this place where we got into committee of the whole House and I think we were there for 11 days. We couldn't get out of the thing, so to me the whole House is not a really nice place to go with a piece of legislation if you want to move forward, so I'm not sure that is a good suggestion.

When we don't have committee hearings, which is very seldom, we're criticized; when we do have committee hearings, we're criticized. That's kind of a Liberal position. I'm surprised to see the NDP take that position.

My friend from Mississauga East had very enlightened, reasoned comments on the bill. Obviously, in committee he has some input that will be beneficial, and of course, it's always nice to have my good friend for St Catharines stand up and make reference to our party and what happens in our party. It's the same old saw he uses for everything, but I've got to give him credit. He's here, he's an old trouser and we get to hear from him on every issue.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Curling: Let me just take the opportunity to comment quickly on the last comment of the member for Chatham-Kent, just to set the record straight. My House leader stated that if we had put it to the committee of the whole we could have dealt with this very easily, and the member's comments were about how long it could be dragged on. He knows, Mr Speaker, and you also know, that that will no longer happen. The rules have changed.

We have a precise time and it should be done efficiently. Therefore the ball is in your court to bring it to the committee of the whole and let us deal with it and get it out of the way. It needs, as you stated, to be corrected and put in focus.

Before we get to that, let me make my comments about this. I also welcome the changes that are happening on the legal aid front. I know there are many, many individuals who were quite frustrated in getting assistance. The process seems that somehow, while it's there, it did not serve very well. Under the previous government, the NDP, they put forward a considerable amount of money to assist in that process. Then when the cap came in, lots of people were shut out and were not able to have access. I presume the system itself needs to change.

With that comment, I want to also make some comments with my colleague from London Centre, one whom I respect tremendously. I try my best at all times when she is speaking to listen to her because there's a lot of sense. Although there are strong emotions — many of us may have a lot of emotions about some issues — she made a lot of sense in her comments.

I also applaud her for the fact that when she got the job as Attorney General she was the first non-lawyer to have taken that position, and did it so well. We have consensus on this bill itself. I say to the members over there, here is someone who was the Attorney General from a layman's point of view and here are the Liberals basically saying to you: "Yes, we see you're going in the right direction. Let's not hold this up. Let's proceed with this bill. But in some of the comments we make, take into consideration that all those little minor details we are pointing out to you can be dealt with in committee of the whole, which can be done very shortly." As we also know, it has become a regular habit now around here that everything has closure to it before we can debate it and have adequate discussion on it. Yet on this one, you seem to want to drag it out in some respect. I would appeal to the members over there in the Conservative Party, in the government, to get on with it.

Legal aid has been around a long time. It's been around since 1951. It has helped many people, but many people who needed help were not able to access this. The system and the process were flawed in many ways. Many women did not have the proper income to have access to justice, because justice, as we know, is extremely expensive. They were denied that and therefore lost their rights and their place in our society. Young offenders, as the previous speaker said, needed that very much too.

Many of the people who are new immigrants to our country need some education about how the legal system works in this country of ours. The fact is that much of the infrastructure wasn't there. When I was at Seneca College, we set up a quasi-legal-aid system, where we had a lawyer who would give free advice about what to do first. It was exceptional, the help and assistance we gave to those individuals. The education about the legal system was extremely helpful. Many times, if I had to bail a student out in some respect, because they then understood

the law and knew where it was going, the system did not have to pay for that in the future. We need the infrastructure to make sure that people are educated about the process.

There are some further comments I want to make in the short time I have. We know the amount of money that was spent in the NDP time. Over \$167 million was spent in 1996-97. What we saw, though, is that when the Conservative government came in and cut it by almost 50%, it really put a hardship on those who want access to justice.

In fixing the system, although we can commend it, one of the problems we have still is in the court system, which needs more money. If you want to take a visit to see the delays in the courts, there is real need for more money in the court system, more money in the police to service the legal system. It's needed there. We cannot just stop here. The funds are needed there.

1750

One of the biggest problems we have in our society today is that each time we are going to make some sort of cut to the system because we have a deficit or a debt, we look first at the poor and say, "That's where we can get the money." They are the ones who pay a higher cost for any deficit or debt, yet they did not cause it, but they are the ones who get blamed for causing the debt and the deficit.

When we take the money, as this government has done, to give a tax break and say we will use this tax break so other people can put it back into society, guess who gets the best of it, Mr Speaker? You know it's very much so. As you nod in agreement, I presume you would ask, how could you take the money from all the poor and give it back to the rich? It's giving it to the rich. We don't mind, of course, if you take it from the rich and give it to the poor. But it's on the backs of the poor; they are paying the debt and the deficit. Not only that, but it's on the backs of our young people, with the high cost of tuition fees today. They have to come up with more money to pay for their tuition. Therefore, it is the poor who are paying for this debt and the deficit.

How can legal aid address them? Make sure, as we put that infrastructure into place, that we don't deprive those individuals.

I'm glad the Minister of Housing came in. He's been around and listening very attentively. Those renters, those individuals who are now faced with an extremely high rent increase that will come about because of the elimination of rent control, will find that if they have to challenge those landlords if they have done anything illegally, they need legal aid funds to fight those landlords.

So what is happening? The present government creates the problem that costs the government more and then blames it on the individuals that they are the ones who are leaning on the government and want government to do everything. If the government had sensible laws, we would not have these problems today.

I'm saying that the elimination of rent control creates homelessness and creates more legal problems. The elimi-

nation of rent control will ensure that individuals have to seek lawyers to do that.

Let me, in the few minutes remaining — we see that 6 o'clock is coming around — talk about some of the concerns I've had in Scarborough North, people who have come and addressed me. They have come before me with lawyers, and many of the lawyers are saying to them, "You can't afford this." They can't afford this lawyer because it will cost them so much to go through all the courts. If individuals do not have sufficient funds in their bank account that will carry this case along, the fact is that some lawyers — and I have cases — are asking their client to plead guilty to cases that they are not guilty of. This is awful for the legal system, awful for the individual.

I had a constituent who is a landed immigrant plead guilty to a case and then later on, when he wanted to get his citizenship, he found out that the guilty plea — he was not guilty — is impeding him now from being a citizen.

What is happening? The lack of funds, the lack of money, has caused this individual a greater hardship on their future.

As we know, who gets punished? Those new immigrants who are here get punished for that. As I said, women who are left money as an income find it very difficult to get the legal assistance that they need.

This legislation is a good move, but I say this is so minimal in addressing the entire inadequacy of justice in our society that we need to do much more in that regard.

I'm just going to wrap up here because we know that 6 o'clock is here. Those are my few comments I'd like to make. Would you like me to adjourn the debate?

The Deputy Speaker: Not necessary. It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 next Monday.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
Ottawa-Rideau	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Victoria-Haliburton	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, président du Conseil de gestion
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinity, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Waterloo North / -Nord	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Ottawa West / -Ouest	Cullen, Alex (L)	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
Parry Sound	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Wentworth North / -Nord	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Willowdale	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Windsor-Riverside	Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	York Mills	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Dave Boushy, Bruce Crozier, Peter Kormos,
Gerry Martiniuk, Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay,
E.J. Douglas Rollins, R. Gary Stewart, Bob Wood
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of Ontario**

Second Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 19 October 1998

Lundi 19 octobre 1998

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers



Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 19 October 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 19 octobre 1998

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Mr Speaker, let me tell you and the Minister of Health and everyone here in the House about Evan, a constituent who sustained a serious arm injury at work. The razor cutter Evan was using slipped and cut deeply into his right arm.

Evan was taken to our only emergency department at St Joseph's Health Centre, where he waited over three hours until he finally received the medical attention necessary to close the cut, which required 28 stitches. Evan was placed in an emergency room cubicle which had blood spots and parts of a cast from an earlier patient. It took Evan's mother 40 minutes to find a nurse to help adjust the compress to stop the bleeding from Evan's arm.

I've talked to doctors, I've talked to nurses, I've talked to patients, and they're all saying the same thing: There isn't enough money devoted to emergency care services. It's not the doctors' fault, it's not the nurses' fault, it's not the administrator of the hospital's fault; it's clearly the government's fault.

Mike Harris's policies are causing these disasters. But lo and behold, all of a sudden we hear that the Ministry of Health, the Mike Harris government is going to commit all this money that we've been talking about for months, weeks and days. Is the government telling the people of Ontario the truth? We want that commitment today. We need it and must have it today.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I want to address the issue of the Harris government's policy of handing guns to 12-year-olds. I have tried, on a number of occasions, to get a clear statement of reasons from this government. Please explain to me why it makes sense to give guns to 12-year-olds.

It has been very difficult to get a minister of the crown to stand up and give a straightforward explanation to the members of this House and to the public. I wanted to talk to the Solicitor General, the chief police officer, about Chief Nagle from the North Bay police force and how he

said that 12-year-olds were just too young and how he doesn't support this policy and how the chiefs of police don't support this policy. I wanted him to say, as chief police officer, why the government supported it. He wouldn't answer the question. He referred it.

I asked the minister responsible for children's issues. After she gave a very incorrect answer, blaming the federal government — I'm assuming she didn't know the right answer; I'm making that assumption, because any other assumption would be unparliamentary — she referred the question.

The Deputy Premier stood up and hid behind the tragedy of a case, when that wasn't even the central part of the question. The Minister of Natural Resources, who has I guess been left out to hang with this policy, in his arrogant way said I don't understand. I understand, the public understands: 12-year-olds are just too young to have guns. Please change your policy.

DIWALI

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): Today Hindu Canadians and Hindus the world over mark the festival of Diwali or Deepawali. This occasion marks the beginning of the Hindu new year. Symbolizing light and the victory of righteousness, Diwali marks the lifting of spiritual darkness in our lives.

Diwali literally means rows of deeyas, or small clay lamps. In Trinidad, these lamps are made on the beach and are then left out in the hot sun to harden. These twinkling oil lamps light up every Hindu home. They are often floated in the sacred Ganges River as a prayer.

Gods which symbolize wealth and prosperity, or lakshmi, and wisdom, or ganesh, are honoured. Diwali also commemorates the return of Lord Rama to his kingdom after a 14-year exile.

In preparation for this holiday, the home is cleaned thoroughly and is often whitewashed. Designs called rangolis are painted on floors and walls. Family members and relatives gather to offer prayer, light up their homes and share quiet festive moments together.

In India, Mother Teresa inaugurated the celebration of Diwali for Indian Christians.

India, Guyana, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, Malaysia and now Ontario all celebrate Diwali. I wish all Hindu Ontarians a most happy new year and a warm "Namaste."

HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I stand here today on a matter of life and death. My constituent Donald Letourneau is fighting aggressive lung cancer. Last week I hand-delivered a letter to the Minister of Health urging her to intercede in the bureaucratic process required to get the Ontario drug benefit plan to give an exemption for the drug Neupogen. This drug would give Mr Letourneau's frail 98-pound body help to withstand the assault of chemotherapy. A form 8 exemption marked "Urgent" by Mr Letourneau's doctor was faxed to the minister last week. We received a call from the minister's office on Friday to say that further clinical evidence was required before a decision can be made.

Donald Letourneau needs that drug now. He cannot wait for more bureaucratic wrangling. The minister's office promised to respond on Monday morning, but we have heard nothing. If there's no decision in his favour today, I will be turning to the citizens of my community to show compassion to Mr Letourneau. He is not wealthy. He cannot afford to pay for Neupogen as many people can.

I fear that we are already living in a province that has a two-tier health care system: one for the rich and one for the poor. I will be seeking donations from my community today, because this government has an abysmal record in ensuring that health services are available to people who need them, whether that is non-formulary drugs or emergency care. We cannot trust the wheels of the Harris government to turn fast enough for Donald Letourneau.

WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY
SPORTS HALL OF FAME

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): On Saturday night I attended the annual Windsor-Essex County Sports Hall of Fame induction dinner. It was a special pleasure as I knew four of the six inductees.

Jim Copeland, a constituent, played in the Canadian Football League for nine seasons and shares the record for most punt returns in a game — 14.

Jerry Slavik organized the first running club in Windsor in 1970 and continues to be involved in organizing events with Walkers and Runners Around the County of Essex, a club that I've been an active member in for over 10 years. WRACE has raised tens of thousands of dollars for local charities.

Kelly-Ann Way wore the jersey of the Windsor Bicycle Club during most of her career, a club that I had the pleasure of being the secretary for. But it's the famous yellow jersey in the Tour de France in 1989 for which we remember her most.

Tim Kerr played 11 seasons with the Philadelphia Flyers and had four consecutive 50-goal seasons. He played in two Stanley Cup final games and holds several NHL records. Tim lived down the street from my house in Tecumseh, and I remember that we wouldn't let him play in our road hockey games on St Pierre Street unless we

were really desperate. It's obvious that his brother Darryl and I underestimated his abilities.

I'd like to congratulate as well Willie Greenwood and Ray Truant.

You make our community proud and set a good example for good athletes to follow.

AGRICULTURE IN NORFOLK

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): Each year about this time we start hearing about Halloween and the old Charlie Brown tale of the Great Pumpkin. I'm proud to report to all MPPs today that the Great Pumpkin is alive and well and was grown in my riding.

Gary Burke, a man from the tiny hamlet of Jericho, has recently grown the heaviest pumpkin in history. I'm sure all members watched the Regis and Kathie Lee show with interest last week, when the Guinness Book of World Records presented Mr Burke with official recognition of his accomplishment.

The great Norfolk pumpkin, which weighs in at 1,092 pounds, broke the previous record of 1,062 pounds at the Port Elgin Pumpkinfest earlier this month. The pumpkin was also an attraction for over 130,000 people attending the Norfolk County Fair the week before Thanksgiving.

In Norfolk there are many fruit and vegetable festivals over the course of our area's long growing season, culminating in the Waterford Pumpkinfest just before Halloween. In Norfolk we not only grow great pumpkins, our farmers grow delicious fruit and vegetables of all shapes and sizes. I suppose I'll have to consult with my local women's institute to see how many pies can be baked from a half-ton pumpkin. I congratulate Mr Burke on his world record, another in a long list of impressive accomplishments for area farmers.

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EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): It's with great interest that we watch the Premier and the Minister of Health battle it out as to who is responsible for emergency care in Ontario and why hospitals in communities like Windsor are continuing to be denied access to appropriate emergency care.

In October 1997, the Ministry of Health document that was created by the Ministry of Health said very specifically that care is fragmented and delayed, said specifically that there is a gridlock there, outlined by the ministry itself. Lead responsibility for this: Ministry of Health. What they said specifically is that there's no reason to delay, that service delivery is hampered, and time will not improve the situation. We have made many requests to fix the situation with health care in Windsor, to no avail.

In the middle of August of this year, we asked the Minister of Long-Term Care specifically to release an internal audit that was done the year before on our home care. Still, to this day, after we have been promised this audit, we have not received it. We want to know why. Is

the Minister of Long-Term Care in charge of that ministry? Can he say that in his own ministry he cannot get access to an internal audit that was done the year before? There is no reason for delay unless there is something very fishy going on within that ministry and the Ministry of Health. We deserve an answer to this.

PINOCHET ARREST

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Today I wanted to honour Heike Jende and Mary Fernandez from schools St Peter, St Raymond, St David for wanting to keep their local schools alive.

But I wanted to make an equally important announcement today, and that is to honour the Chilean community for the recent events that have been going on that hopefully will bring Augusto Pinochet to justice.

As you know, he was arrested over the weekend in England, and I have to tell you that I celebrate that moment with a great deal of happiness. He, of course, was the man who in a coup in 1973 brought down the duly elected president, Salvador Allende. During that regime, thousands of people have gone missing, thousands were tortured, thousands were killed by that military dictator. Many have waited for a long, long time to savour this sweet moment of justice.

I congratulate the Chilean expatriates who are here in Toronto and those who are in many other parts of the world for the courage and commitment to bring this military dictator to justice. I tell you, only when justice is done can people be genuinely healed, and only when justice is done can people genuinely move on. I congratulate them for their courage.

SMALL BUSINESS IN WELLINGTON

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): Small business people are the province's number one job creators, accounting for 80% of the new jobs in Ontario. Today I want to recognize the contributions of small business entrepreneurs who live in and near the area that I'm privileged to represent, people like Ray and Ruth Grose of Alma and Clare Weber of St Jacobs.

The Groses started Husky Farm Equipment in Alma 40 years ago. From a small family operation, the business has grown and now employs 38 people. Husky produces farm equipment such as barn stalls, bale elevators, silo unloaders and machines that handle liquid manure. A successful export business, Husky has 50% of its market in the United States.

Weber's Fabricating is another small business success story. Operating out of St Jacobs, the company was started in 1974 by Clare Weber, then 29, as a one-man operation. Weber's now has grown and employs close to 40 people. Clare began by producing turkey loaders, but Weber's has since diversified and expanded, producing steel and aluminum dump truck boxes, recycling trucks and some of the best fire trucks built in North America. Weber's also

refurbishes existing fire trucks as well as doing custom manufacturing and welding repairs.

These are but two examples of how small business people have led the way in creating over 400,000 new jobs since the government assumed office in 1995. We salute you and your employees who contribute so much to your success, and pledge to continue to improve the climate that helps small businesses generate the new jobs we need.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY 407 ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR L'AUTOROUTE 407

Mr Sampson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 70, An Act to engage the private sector in improving transportation infrastructure, reducing traffic congestion, creating jobs, and stimulating economic activity through the sale of Highway 407 / Projet de loi 70, Loi visant à intéresser le secteur privé à améliorer l'infrastructure des transports, réduire la circulation engorgée, créer des emplois et stimuler l'activité économique par la vente de l'autoroute 407.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): Just a few comments, if I may. This bill, if enacted, would allow the province to engage the private sector in building extensions to the highway and in financing and operating the completed highway. Private sector ownership of the highway will free taxpayers from the financing costs associated with the highway while ensuring an early start to the construction. Subject to approval by the Legislature, Ontarians will benefit from improved transportation infrastructure, more jobs and a competitive advantage for our industries here in Ontario.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm on October 19, 20, 21 and 22, 1998, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SMALL BUSINESS

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): It is with great pleasure that I rise to inform the House that today we are launching a very special salute to the thousands of men and women who operate and work in small businesses — Ontario's number one job creator.

Small businesses are among the unsung heroes of our communities. As a former small business owner myself, I know that not only do they create new products and services, they create jobs — tens of thousands of them. They are the lifeblood of Main Streets across Ontario. Small businesses create more than 80% of all new jobs, more than any other sector. They have led the way in creating the 366,000 new private sector jobs that Ontario's economy has produced since the throne speech in September 1995.

Ontario has 309,000 registered businesses. The vast majority of these firms, close to 300,000 of them, are small businesses employing fewer than 100 people. Almost 223,000 of them, more than two thirds, employ less than five people. A great many of these businesses give Ontario's young people their very first new jobs.

What we have in Ontario is an army of entrepreneurs. Ask them and they will tell you that running a small business can be exciting and rewarding, but it also takes courage and determination to meet the challenges. Running a small business successfully is a tremendous accomplishment.

Our government is pleased to have been able to help small businesses create these jobs by cutting taxes, eliminating red tape and putting the economy back on track. A thriving small business sector means more jobs and stronger communities.

We have cut provincial income tax by 30%, putting more money in people's pockets. We have cut personal and business taxes 66 times in three years. We have established an ongoing Red Tape Commission to remove regulatory barriers. We reformed the Workers' Compensation Act. We eliminated the employer health tax for 80% of all businesses. We eliminated the self-employment health tax. We put a freeze on hydro rates. We will cut the small business corporate tax rate in half over the next eight years.

1350

Businesses can now access government programs such as business registration renewals and updates through the Internet, by telephone, in person or at workstations across Ontario seven days a week, 24 hours a day. No more waiting in lineups.

At the same time, we have increased access to financing for small businesses through programs like community small business investment funds, small business invest-

ment tax credits and the Young Entrepreneurs Program, which is a partnership with the Royal Bank.

Our commitment to helping small business grow and create jobs also means recognizing that our entrepreneurs have special needs.

Ontario's network of small business enterprise centres, launched last October, is designed to help entrepreneurs face the unique challenges of rapid growth. Enterprise centres are public and private sector partnerships. We have joined forces with private sector companies, financial institutions, municipalities and others to provide information and advice to small business owners. It's a great partnership and we're pleased that it is so successful.

By working with small business owners, their communities and the private sector, we are planning today for tomorrow's jobs.

On this special occasion, we salute the accomplishments and the contributions of Ontario's small business sector.

On behalf of all Ontarians, keep up the great work.

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I listened with interest to the minister's statement, where he saluted small business and commended them for their contribution to the economy. I think we all agree there's no question that the lifeblood and the base for job increasing, for economic development, takes place in the small business sector.

Having said that, I'd like to quote a couple of comments that were sent to your colleague the Minister of Finance by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. They say, and this was just sent recently:

"We are hearing about devastating property tax increases from small and medium-size businesses all over the province. First it was London, then Windsor, then Aurora, and more concerns are streaming in daily....

"We can only reiterate that the province should have imposed the use of the tools to protect small business, rather than relying on municipalities to be responsible....

"Large numbers of small businesses are experiencing outrageous increases....

"There has been no progress on narrowing the unfair business-residential gap."

In conclusion, they ask that you implement the promise that you made to them to ensure that the business tax would not impact negatively on small businesses.

Minister, if there is one issue that has gripped the small business sector, it is the devastating increase in taxes that is making their very survival a problem for them and putting them in great jeopardy.

Adding to that, you also go to lengths to talk about the freeze you put on Hydro. Let me tell you that freeze will expire in the year 2000, which isn't very far away, but all you have to do is see what has happened at the hearings that took place on the new Hydro restructuring, see the concerns that are expressed daily in the media on the issues about funding the decommissioning of nuclear facilities, of how we apportion the stranded debt, and you will find that you're going to have to impose a tax on small businesses that will make them even more non-competitive.

This is an issue that will not go away. This is an issue that will come back to haunt all of us. This is an issue that you, as the minister responsible for economic development, should be participating in in coming to a solution that will make sure that this onerous obligation is not transferred to the small business and medium business sector. This is something that is going to create a terrible problem for us. It's going to make us uncompetitive and, more importantly, it's going to put the very people you are trying to salute today in a perilous situation where they will no longer be able to compete.

I say to you, when it comes to the business realty tax, unless a decision is taken, I have to tell you that just the fact that the appeal period has been postponed is not going to solve the problem. We have businesses that are facing crippling tax increases. There are situations that have been brought to my attention where their realty tax is higher than their rent. Imagine a situation where a businessman finds that the rent he is paying is less than the realty tax. That doesn't make any sense and it doesn't make any opportunity for these people to stay in business. I suggest to you that rather than the salute you're giving today, most businesses think they've already got that salute. It's the salute on the finger on one hand and that's what they feel you've done to them.

I suggest to you that this is an issue of paramount importance. It's an issue that has to be resolved, because if it isn't, we are going to have a problem that is going to be totally beyond our control to save these businesses. We're going to have a catastrophic situation where the engine you are so proud of, the engine that is going to provide the kind of jobs you need and we all need — you are going to find that they can't do it for reasons that have nothing to do with their economic needs, but have to do with your poorly conceived tax structure, one that is going to come back to create problems for all of us.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): On behalf of the NDP caucus, I want to say at the outset that we agree with the minister in his statement in one way, and that is, in saluting small businesses for the work they do in creating more and more jobs. We acknowledge today that great contribution that they will continue to make. But that quite frankly is where our acknowledgement of this statement ends in terms of what it means.

The minister is standing up today rhyming off a number of things the government has done. We know the Premier is out today visiting in Bloor West Village with a number of small businesses, ironically enough, visiting some of the same businesses that would have had to close their doors had the government not come to some of its senses and reversed its position on the property tax mess they've caused. Many of those businesses the Premier is now visiting, as we stand here today, would have been businesses that would have closed down because they would have had huge increases in property taxes.

That is but one of the examples of what this government is doing to small businesses. Let me go back and touch on a couple of other areas before coming back in greater detail to this property tax mess.

The minister talked, and I appreciated his mentioning his government's support for reducing red tape. I wish he would have mentioned the fact that that's not something the Tory government discovered. In our own government, through initiatives called Clearing the Path, we began that process of making it simpler for small businesses to register. Through sector partnership plans we built up the efforts to work with small businesses, and large businesses for that matter, to ensure there was good co-operation between business and government in helping to create jobs. The minister mentioned their job numbers, which we know at the end of the day will be far, far short of the 725,000 they set for themselves and for the province.

The minister and the government can stand here today and tell us all they want about how supportive they are of small businesses, but the Premier himself acknowledged over the weekend how worried he is about the image that has been building among small businesses vis-à-vis the Tory party. And no wonder. Given the huge increase in property taxes that this government has set about delivering to small businesses, no wonder that many small businesses are worried, and have reason to be worried, about where the Tory government is going.

I remember a time when people thought that the property tax issue was one that only affected Toronto, that it was only a question of resolving, or, from the government's side, having to deal politically with resolving the issue in Toronto. But now you hear that it's a problem all over the province, to the point that such a Common Sense Revolutionary as Mayor Don Cousens of Markham is now going to lead a march to Queen's Park.

1400

If people like Mayor Don Cousens of Markham are realizing what a problem this is, then many other mayors in the GTA and indeed throughout the province are finally realizing that they have had a problem handed to them by the Tory government at Queen's Park, a problem which they cannot resolve municipally because the greatest reason for that increase has to do with the downloading of costs on to the municipal tax base, the property tax base, as well as the centralized control of the education budget that the government has done and which consequently also results in great increases in the property tax system over which municipalities don't have any flexibility.

If the government wants to talk about supporting small business, let them come to grips with that very real problem of what the property tax changes have done and will continue to do for small businesses throughout the area, whether it's here in Toronto, whether it's communities like the minister's own backyard of Kleinburg, whether it's other communities in the GTA or indeed throughout the province. Let them realize that they cannot continue with this property tax system and let them realize once and for all that the only sensible thing is to put a freeze on this year's property taxes at last year's rate until they resolve this problem for the long term, because resolving it for the long term is going to take more than a week or a month and, in the meantime, time is fast running out.

We have a bill that the government is still playing around with and we don't know, between the Tory party and the Liberal Party, when this bill is going to come forward so that we can deal at least with the extension of the deadline for appeals, which affects many small businesses, a deadline which, particularly when it comes to the small business sector, has already bypassed us. In fact, October 16 was that deadline for people to give notice of their intention to seek the occupancy tax from the operators of the business. Again I say to the government, deal with the property tax issue right now.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): On a point of order, Speaker: Yesterday was Persons Day and I'm asking for unanimous consent for an all-party statement to celebrate the day that women became persons in this country. Is that agreed?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member is asking for unanimous consent for an all-party statement for Persons Day. Agreed? No.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for St Catharines is absolutely right.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health. This is a copy of a press release issued on April 20, 1998. Minister, you issued this press release. I want to send you a copy to make sure that you recognize it. You're quoted in it. "Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer today announced the government will be acting immediately on recommendations put forward in the final report of the emergency services working group" dealing with hospital emergency rooms, overcrowding and cutbacks that your government has enacted. You said you would act immediately. You had two months before that because the government joined the committee the OHA put forward.

Minister, do you agree that this is what you said on April 20? Because I met some people last night, visiting five hospital emergency rooms in Toronto, who know what it means to act immediately. They are ambulance workers, they are nurses and they're doctors, and they want to know what you meant when you said on April 20, 1998, you would act immediately to fix emergency rooms in Ontario.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): In response to the question from the member, the member knows that emergency room pressures are an issue that is not new to this government. They were part of the NDP and part of the Liberal government. I would indicate that we have been working forward according to our plan. We want to make sure that when we provide the funding, we also ensure there is accountability in the system, and we will be doing exactly that.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, today, as you may know, there are quotes from the Premier. The Premier said, "It's just unacceptable that the money we pledged in April" — and he said "we"; he acknowledged that you said "immediately" in April — "is not available and is not being put to use in the emergency room."

Last week, you tried to tell us you were taking action, that everything was OK. The workers I talked to don't think it's OK. It's not OK for a woman to have to vomit for three hours because a doctor isn't available, because the room is so crowded they can't through-put patients adequately, because you haven't put forward the money you promised on April 20. It's not acceptable to have patients transported to two and three hospitals by stressed emergency crews, as they were all through last week, because you wouldn't put the money forward immediately. Minister, do you agree with the Premier? Has it been unacceptable that there has been no money put forward since you promised it in April?

Hon Mrs Witmer: We always indicated that by October we would be in a position where we could address the recommendations of the emergency room. We want to make sure that when this money does flow, we can be assured that all of the money that is being flowed to the hospitals will indeed be used for emergency rooms and will be used to improve the pressures in emergency rooms.

Mr Kennedy: Here you are again, on October 19, trying to blame the hospitals, trying to blame the workers who are stressed out beyond compare. I actually saw ambulance workers and nurses fighting over whether a patient should come into a particular hospital because of the strain they have. Minister, you're misleading the workers if you say it's their fault. St Michael's —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): You can't accuse the minister of misleading. You must withdraw.

Mr Kennedy: I withdraw.

St Michael's emergency room is still waiting for the capital to expand it. Humber River hospital was closed to critical care bypass completely, six or seven people in the hallway, and nothing's been done to expand that emergency room. They have no more beds in the hospital.

Minister, you won't stand up and defend the hospitals. You won't defend the bureaucrats. You made the promise. The Premier is not here. He said he would make the money happen. Will you resign because you haven't done this?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I believe it's somewhat unfair for the member opposite to suggest that anyone is blaming anyone in the hospitals. I believe our government has made it abundantly clear since we were elected that it is our desire to work with all the stakeholders. That's why we became involved in an emergency room task force with the Ontario Hospital Association. That's why we were very pleased to see that when the recommendations were issued, there were not only instructions for the Ministry of Health but also instructions to the hospitals. The reality is, if we are going to provide a solution that is going to relieve the pressure in the emergency rooms, it is going to take the co-operation of the hospitals and the government

and the public to ensure we can provide the solutions that are needed.

1410

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): To the Minister of Health: The people who are working to try to make your health system and your cuts work for patients understand what is needed for a partnership: They need a health minister who will be the health minister.

Minister, you've cut \$800 million from hospitals. You've taken it away. You've cut back the rooms. You took away the nurses who served those rooms. It's affecting real people in the real world. We've been trying to get you and your predecessor and your Premier to pay attention since February 1996, when a gentleman died in the hallway in Peterborough unattended, found there by his daughter in February 1996.

This report talks about two things. It says it's your responsibility. The problem started in October 1996. It says that these are just Band-Aids that you're waiting on. You have to deal with the real problems: the cuts to the hospitals, to the emergency beds, to home care, the fact that you won't expand home care in areas where the hospitals have been cut. Minister, will you at least stand up today and apologize to the families of people whose health has been compromised by the lack of action by you and your government? Will you at least have the grace to do that today?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): Our government, since 1995 when it recognized that the health system was in jeopardy, has moved forward to ensure that many positive changes have been made to strengthen the health system in this province. We recognized that the needs of the population were changing, that we had a population that was rapidly aging. We realized it was growing.

We have provided now an additional cardiac centre. We are providing three additional cancer centres. We have more dialysis centres than ever before. We have more long-term beds that are going to be made available. We have invested and we have provided an additional \$1.2 billion. We were spending \$17.4 billion when we were elected. Now we're spending \$18.6 billion.

We are not providing a Band-Aid. We are restructuring. We are making sure that the services the people need are going to be there when the people need them, not only now —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary, member for Fort William.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Minister, on July 25, Barry Dunn, a resident of Thunder Bay, died in a hospital in Duluth, Minnesota, following an emergency nine-and-a-half-hour operation. Mr Dunn had been a cancer patient who was doing well enough after his original surgery to undertake a trip to southern Ontario with his wife and his grandson. He became ill while overnighting in Wawa on the North Shore and he went into hospital

there. His situation rapidly became critical and the physician in the Wawa emergency room started to look for a hospital bed where Mr Dunn could be admitted for urgently needed surgery. There was no intensive care bed in Ontario for Barry Dunn. Mr Dunn was sent to Duluth, Minnesota, where the surgery was done.

Mr Dunn's family does not understand why there was no place in an Ontario hospital for this man to get the urgent care he needed. Can you explain to Mrs Dunn why there would be no bed for her husband in this critical situation?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Certainly those situations are always situations that I think do touch us greatly. But let me remind you that under the NDP and Liberal governments we cut 10,000 beds from our health system, but we didn't embark on the restructuring that was so badly needed. We were not providing the additional dialysis services or the additional long-term-care services or the community care services in order that we could ensure that we could start moving people into long-term-care services and that we could free up the emergency room space. We are now undertaking that restructuring that should have happened five and 10 years ago. I'm very pleased to say that we are moving forward to ensure that people have the services they need.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, Barry Dunn's widow and his daughter are in Thunder Bay listening to your responses today. They believe that the Ontario health care system failed to respond at a time when care was urgently needed. The health care system failed to respond in not having a bed for a critically ill patient, but the health care system also failed to respond in the time it took to get Barry Dunn to hospital once a bed was found in Minnesota.

The air ambulance was called at 3:10 pm, immediately after the Wawa physician consulted with the surgeon in Duluth. The air ambulance service indicated that it would be two and a half hours before they could send a plane to Wawa. It was in fact two hours and 45 minutes later that Barry Dunn, who was critically ill, was airborne. That two-and-a-half-hour delay may or may not have affected Barry Dunn's ability to survive his surgery, but without question a two-and-a-half-hour delay can make a difference between life and death in many situations.

Barry Dunn's family wants to make sure that no one else will face this tragedy. Minister, do you agree that two-and-a-half-hour delays in transporting a critically ill patient are unacceptable, and will you take immediate steps to investigate and ensure that this will not happen again?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Let me assure all members that our government is very concerned about patient services, patient care, reducing the waiting time, providing the appropriate level of service. That's why our government, unlike your government, who said that \$17.4 billion was enough, is investing additional dollars. We want to make sure the services can be provided.

We also need to make sure that when money is provided to the stakeholders, there is accountability in the system. We will certainly continue to work with you and

we will do everything necessary to ensure that those situations can be eliminated in the future.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. You have been repeatedly asked why the \$225 million that you announced last spring to fix the problem that you created in hospital emergency wards hasn't gotten to the hospitals yet. Your answer last week and your answer here today is basically, "We're not done the paperwork yet." So while people suffer, while people can't get the health care they need, the hospital care they need, and while some people are dying, you are doing paperwork.

We need to get to the bottom of this. Minister, can you tell the people of Ontario, has the \$225 million that you announced even gone to Management Board yet for approval? Can you tell us that?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I can indicate to you that we will ensure there is a plan in place to flow the money to the hospitals in this province.

Mr Hampton: This illustrates the problem. We all know that government can't flow money until it goes to Management Board for approval. We know this announcement was made six months ago. I asked the minister a pointed question: Has it gone to Management Board for approval? She can't answer it.

Minister, it's your cabinet colleagues who sit on Management Board. It's not bureaucrats; it's not civil servants; it's your cabinet colleagues who haven't approved the \$225 million. What are you going to do to get your government, your cabinet colleagues, to put the \$225 million in place so people in this province can get the hospital care they need and they deserve?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Let me again remind you that when we were elected, we indicated that we would fix government; we would ensure that the process would be expedited. Let me tell you that by the end of today, our government will be in a position to provide the hospitals with the funds.

Mr Hampton: I want to take this minister up. You and your Premier have been going across this province making phony, empty announcements about health care. Is that what you call "fixing government"?

You announced \$225 million for emergency wards six months ago. No one has seen it, and people are dying and people are suffering. The Premier went into Ear Falls and announced \$300,000 for the community clinic. People have seen \$5,000 of the \$300,000 so far, six months later. You announced \$36 million to help communities in rural and northern Ontario recruit and retain physicians. No one has seen the money. You announced \$5 million to help recruit nurse practitioners in communities that are underserved. No one has seen the money.

You've made one phony health care announcement after another. Is that what you and your Premier call "fixing government"?

Hon Mrs Witmer: We are very proud of our record. In fact, as I said before, we have actually increased health care spending by \$1.2 billion. We have made additional services available. We are providing more cardiac surgery than ever before, more cancer treatment than ever before, more dialysis services than ever before, more hip-and-knee replacements than ever before. Every baby born in this province is now going to be screened according to our new Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program. We are doubling the number of preschoolers who are receiving assistance with speech and language difficulties. We are going to have an additional cardiac centre and three more cancer centres. I can assure you that we have already spent \$1.2 billion more. We have spent more money in restructuring that is on top of the \$1.2 billion —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question, third party.

1420

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My next question is to the minister responsible for children and it's about mental health services for children.

I would say to the Minister of Health you have made about \$1.2 billion in empty, phony announcements. While you make those empty, phony announcements, people's health care suffers.

I want to ask the minister responsible for children —

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): Is that a question, Howie?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Listen, I understand, and you keep bringing this up. I'm not going to tell the members how to ask the questions, and I'm not going to tell you how to answer them. If the leader wants to spend his time talking about that, he is rightfully able to do so. Don't continue to heckle me while he's doing it.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister, you just heckled me again. I'm asking you not to heckle me. Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: To the minister responsible for children, there are a lot of children in this province who need and cannot get mental health services. It's supposed to be your job to mandate mental health services. We know that your colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services wants to collapse mental health services into the rest of her bureaucracy. Can you tell us what you're doing to ensure that children in this province get the mental health services they need and deserve?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): I'm going to refer that question to the minister who is responsible for children's mental health services.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Margaret, you're conducting the review of mental health services.

The Speaker: Member for Beaches-Woodbine, come to order.

Minister, I have no idea who the minister responsible for children's mental health services is. Can you tell me which ministry it is?

Hon Mrs Marland: It is the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I say to the member opposite that I respect that he and his members are very committed to this issue and have a concern about children's mental health issues, but I respectfully request that he get the facts straight. There is no plan to collapse children's mental health services into any other program.

On a community-by-community basis, we have asked the question, "How do we take children's services and provide them in a way that responds better to the needs of families?" We have had some very excellent input from those families. Under our Making Services Work for People, that initiative is actually taking those agencies and programs, and instead of asking families to tie themselves up like a pretzel to meet the rules of agencies, we are taking those programs and adapting them to the needs of families. The honourable member should be aware of that. We've offered briefings to all the MPPs about what's happening in their community. I would respectfully suggest that he take one of those briefings.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Ms Lankin: Your regional office in North Bay is forcing an amalgamation of three children's mental health centres with children's aid and child protection services in the Timmins district. Those three centres are in Timmins, Kapuskasing and Kirkland Lake. Those families say they don't want those services amalgamated. They say there is no evidence that this forced amalgamation is going to either save money or improve service delivery. In fact, they're worried that families won't go to get the mental health services that they need for their kids if it's under the spectre of child protection services. They also say, because children's mental health services are not legislatively mandated and child protection services are, that if you collapse the two together, for sure children's mental health services are going to be the ones that will lose out and will be eroded.

The Premier seemed to agree with me. When I put the question to him in the spring about the need for mandated services, he seemed to agree and he directed the minister responsible for children's issues to conduct a review, the minister who won't answer questions. Given that review isn't finished, why is your ministry area office forcing an amalgamation on these services?

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to the honourable member, she is aware that the minister responsible for children's issues has been meeting with families and agencies in the children's mental health area to talk about improvements that we can make in the service delivery of the system. Again, that is responding to the needs that those families have articulated to us. Secondly, we are also reviewing the needs of special-needs children who have multi-needs in many areas that may well include mental health.

In terms of the member's specific question on the North Bay area office, as she again should be aware, what we have done is gone to the community and said, "Here are the important principles that you as families have said we need to meet in children's services." Those recommendations have come forward from the community. We are in the process of looking at them. There have been many suggestions that have come forward from children's aid and children's mental health. We don't believe we should be arbitrarily setting up different agencies if there are ways to take services and provide them in a better fashion.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mrs Ecker: We don't believe in arbitrarily putting out a structure if it's not meeting the needs of those families. There has been no attempt to somehow put agencies in the position where they're making —

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Hampton: The point is this: The communities do not want this forced amalgamation. They do not want mental health services to be collapsed under your ministry, because they know it will mean the loss of mental health services for those children who badly need them.

The example I want to give you is one from my own part of the province, in the northwest. Kenora-Patricia Child and Family Services, the child protection agency in the northwest, wrote to you about children in the Dryden area who are at risk because they can't get the mental health services they need. One is a nine-year-old boy from Dryden who has had to be sent to Winnipeg to get those mental health services because they are not available west of Thunder Bay. People's fear is that when you collapse mental health services which are not mandated, which are not required by law or legislation, under children's aid, a whole lot of children are going to lose mental health services.

Minister, the question comes back to you. What are you and your colleague the minister for children, who never answers a question, going to do to ensure children get the mental health services they need?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Again I would say to the honourable member that if he had taken the briefing that was offered to members, he would know that we are not collapsing children's mental health services. What we are doing is responding to what families said they —

Ms Lankin: That's what's happening in the North Bay regional office.

The Speaker: Member for Beaches-Woodbine, come to order.

Hon Mrs Ecker: One of the things families said they did not like was that when they had a child who had many needs, they had to knock on a whole bunch of agencies' doors and everyone wanted to assess them and everyone had different needs and everyone had different funding processes. They said loudly and clearly that it wasn't working. We went to the community. We said, "How do we take these services and provide them in a better way that meets those families' needs?"

We are not slashing funding. As a matter of fact, we have been finding areas where we can save on admin costs

and we've been reinvesting and increasing money in other areas, responding to the needs of those families. There is no policy decision that has been made or will be made to somehow collapse funding. The funding is there. The question is, instead, as parents have kept saying, "Please give it to us in a way that has those agencies meet our needs."

1430

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): We'll once again attempt to get an answer from the Minister of Health. Minister, in the hallways of Toronto hospitals there are patients who are being cared for inadequately. There is an incredible amount of effort being made by the nurses, but they can't give the same care when people lie on cots in the hallway. Those are Mike Harris cots; many of them weren't there before.

For people who are wondering what they'll be facing when the emergency happens, a key indicator is the statistics kept on redirects, when ambulances can't go, and critical care bypasses, when they can't go even if there's a crisis, an emergency, a heart attack on the doorstep of the hospital.

Minister, six months ago we asked you for those statistics. Again in July we met with your officials. They said they would provide them. What are you trying to cover up from the people of Ontario? They need to know what the status has been. You have waited, delayed, six months to do anything. Why are you also covering up the situation in the emergency rooms? Will you release the critical care bypass and redirect statistics today?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): What we are endeavouring to do is make sure this problem is handled in a way that we fix it, we fix the problem in government that we've had, and we fix the problem in a way that we can ensure that the emergency room pressures do not continue to occur time and time and time again. That's why we embarked on health services restructuring. We wanted to ensure that we found solutions to these long-standing problems, problems that were there under your government.

Even your federal transport minister, David Collenette, when he was pressed on whether the recent backups in emergency rooms were due to the \$6 billion in cuts the federal government has made to health and social programs over the last five years or whether they are due to Harris —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: — and the provincial government's restructuring, said, "It really isn't anyone's fault." It isn't. But together we need to work and we need to make sure —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Kennedy: Let's just quickly review what you've done to fix the problem. In February you said it was the flu. You were forced to join a task force when the Premier had to go to the emergency room. That task force said it's

your responsibility, that problems of this nature started in October 1996. They said it wasn't the flu. They said it's hospital beds; it's the cutbacks.

Minister, you had that report on April 20 and you did nothing. In Hamilton the situation was just as bad in June as it was in January, just as bad in July as it was in August. The redirect statistics show that. Why are you ignoring the situation? You won't fix it and you won't even show us, the people who need the service in Ontario, how bad it is. Will you stop the cover-up? Will you release the statistics on what's happening in Ontario communities today as you're blocking the beds for the patients in those ambulances?

Hon Mrs Witmer: What we are not doing is attempting to fearmonger and cause panic in the community, as has been suggested at several points in time. We are trying to find constructive solutions to what we believe are real issues and real problems facing people in this province. We have never heard any plan from you or your colleagues. We have a plan. We did work with the Ontario hospitals to establish the emergency services working group. We are acting now on their recommendations, recommendations that also take into consideration the fact that it's up to the hospitals to make sure they can improve the traffic flow through the emergency rooms.

We, with our partners —

The Speaker: Answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: — are endeavouring to ensure that we can improve the accessibility and reduce the waiting times in those emergency rooms. We have a plan —

The Speaker: New question, third party.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question for the Minister of Education and Training. Two weeks ago I read a letter that was addressed to the member for Simcoe West from one of his constituents, a parent at Duntroon Central School, thanking him for his commitment to save their school. That parent, Jackie Knisley, thanked the minister because he had said, "Oh, I won't let them close your school." Then, a few days later, we read in the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* two more of the minister's colleagues from the backbench making similar promises. The members for Grey-Owen Sound and Wellington told the *Record* there is reason to believe that you may be backing off your funding formula in order to prevent the closure of rural schools.

Do these three members of the government caucus have some insider information about school closing, or is this just wishful thinking on their part?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I'm glad to see that the members of the government are getting involved with the schools in their communities and I would encourage all members to get involved with their schools. Indeed, it's my view and it's the government's view that these community schools are very important. They involve many walks of life, recreation activities, social activities and that sort of thing. I

encourage, and hope that each and every member will get involved and see how schools are going to work.

For my part, through the Ministry of Education, we've laid out a fair funding formula, fair for all the 72 boards across Ontario, a funding formula that respects the enrolment at each and every school, a funding formula that provides additional monies for remote and rural schools on a fair and equitable basis, a funding formula that provides money to each board for the small schools they have on a fair and equitable basis, and then it's up to the school boards to take that money and determine what's best for their students.

Mr Wildman: In the October 8 edition of the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, these two members are quoted as saying that there's a rural-urban split in your caucus around these school closures and the funding formula. They also indicate that the minister may be getting ready to change the funding formula. Will the minister guarantee that any change he makes in the education funding formula that will allow more schools to remain open will apply equally to schools right across the province, both urban and rural?

Hon David Johnson: As our funding formula has been constructed, I will guarantee that it will be fair and equitable to all of the students, to all of the school boards across Ontario. That is the basis for the funding formula. It doesn't pick and choose favourites or winners or losers; it establishes funding on the basis of need, and it does so fairly and equitably. That's the way the funding formula is set up and that's what I would insist on. Having done that, then it is the job of the school boards, as it has been during an NDP government, as it was during a Liberal government, to determine what is the best possible accommodation for their particular students, in conjunction, I might say, with speaking with their parents and their community, on which we insist.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): My question today is for the minister responsible for women's issues. Recently a very successful event was held in my riding where a number of distinguished women from Guelph, Wellington county and beyond had an opportunity to present themselves as role models to young women in Guelph. I understand this came about as part of the Partners for Change program. I know you've spoken to the House before about Partners for Change, an initiative to bring forward the issues of women's economic dependence and prevention of violence against women projects. Minister, I wish today that you would share with the House information about various activities that Partners for Change has been undertaking across the province.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): The Partners for Change Network began at the Ontario Women's Directorate about three years ago and it has become quite a successful informal and formal network of women who come together, first of all, to provide

each other with information and raise their concerns about influencing young women about the choices they can make for life with regard to their education courses or preparing them for the world of work and their careers. We are expanding — I've raised this point in the House before — and if any of you have members of your community who are interested in becoming active in networking, please let me know directly or send letters and information to the Ontario Women's Directorate.

Mrs Elliott: We're busy celebrating Small Business Week, starting today. I know that more small businesses are being established by women in Ontario and across Canada than by men. I'm curious, as we're thinking about this topic, if Partners for Change has new initiatives being developed that would further address the issue of economic independence for women, particularly in small business.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Actually a couple of weeks ago we launched a program called Fast Forward. This is a resource about women entrepreneurs in Canada. The president, of course, is Andrina Lever.

For many of you who have worked with us in this House and across Canada — Mr Speaker, you might be interested to know — more than 700,000 businesses led by women provide 1.7 million jobs. It's even more impressive when you think that Canadian businesses' top 100 companies would provide about 1.5 million jobs. So women in their businesses are the producers of the fastest-growing and the most jobs in Canada today.

This Fast Forward resource certainly is made available from the women entrepreneurs of Canada and we would be proud to pass this resource on to those of you who would like to share it with many of the young women in your communities.

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HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Health. She'll be familiar with this case because I wrote a letter to her a year ago on it. There was a woman in the area I represent who was eight months pregnant, went to our fine local hospital and developed a brain hemorrhage. The hospital desperately tried to get her brain surgery here in Toronto and made 21 phone calls to four different hospitals over a two-hour period begging them to take her in for brain surgery. None of them would accommodate her or could accommodate her. Finally, Hamilton General agreed to deal with her problem. Air ambulance was phoned and was unavailable. She was transported by land and, as you know, tragically she passed away, although fortunately the baby was saved.

I sent you a letter on this over a year ago. You said that I must wait for a coroner's report before you would tell what was going to be done to make certain this never happened again. I've now been told by the coroner's office that they won't even begin this inquiry until next year. That will be over 18 months. My question is this: Is it

satisfactory to you that 18 months will go by before we find out what happened, and what can be done to prevent it happening in the future?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I would be pleased to follow up on this situation.

Mr Phillips: This is the problem. I twice have sent you letters, Minister. I did not raise this publicly, as you know, for many months, hoping that you would deal with it sensitively and confidentially. The family has gone through unbearable pain. I have now sent you two letters on this. I have begged you to give us an answer on what you are going to do about it, and today you tell me, "Well, you'll have to wait," before I'll hear an answer back from you. It is, dare I say, not unlike the emergency ward situation where you promised action. Frankly, any minister on a daily basis would have said about the emergency: "Where does that stand now? Is it fixed? Tell me that we're fixing it." Similarly on this.

Two letters on one of the most tragic cases ever seen. It is unbelievable; 21 desperate calls from my local hospital, the Scarborough Grace Hospital — by the way, a terrific hospital — and they couldn't get her accommodated here in Toronto; forced to send her by land. I might also add that when she arrived there they had to get a doctor from another hospital to perform the surgery to save the baby.

It is unsatisfactory, Minister, that you will look into this. Tell us today, is it acceptable that we will have to wait 18 months before we find out what happened and what will be done to fix it and make sure it never happens again?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member opposite is well aware of the fact that in this province it is the coroner who looks into these situations. He is also very aware that, depending on what the recommendations are, it is then up to the Ministry of Health to follow the coroner's recommendation. I can assure you that as soon as the coroner has completed the review, our ministry is prepared to follow up on those recommendations, and we are anxious to see those.

ABORTION

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is to the minister responsible for women's issues. Earlier this year St Michael's Hospital took over Wellesley Hospital as a result of your government's hospital restructuring, and promptly announced it was discontinuing Wellesley's abortion services. St Mike's announced that it would require women to go through a committee process already deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Canada, which has ruled that abortion is a medical service chosen by a woman on the advice of her physician. Minister, as a result, women in this community continue to lack access to the 1,000 to 1,500 abortion procedures which used to be performed at Wellesley every year. At the time, the Minister of Health assured this Legislature that those services would be not be lost, but to date there has been absolutely no sign that her promise has been kept.

Minister, you are responsible for women's issues. What are you doing to ensure the right of women to have access to safe, legal abortion services in Ontario?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): I think that would be more appropriately addressed by the Minister of Health.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): The member knows that when the transfer was made — St Michael's Hospital, like any other hospital, doesn't interfere in the confidential provider-patient relationship. Also, the transfer was planned by the head of obstetrics and gynecology at St Michael's and Wellesley Central Hospital as part of an overall process, and certainly there is an opportunity for the services to be provided in the other hospitals within this city. We all know that within the city of Toronto, not all hospitals provide every type of service. This service is available to women throughout the entire city of Toronto.

Mrs Boyd: I'm sorry that the minister responsible for women's issues didn't answer, since clearly the Premier has decided that women are an important target for the Tories in the next election.

But in response to the Minister of Health, this isn't the only problem that women have in getting abortion services in this province. Fewer than 40% of Ontario's hospitals are providing abortion services, physicians are intimidated and threatened when they perform these services, and now you, your government, have agreed with the OMA to limit the billing of physicians who perform abortions, thus creating a huge disincentive for physicians to perform these services.

Minister, if you really think it's important for your party to appeal to the women of this province, it's pretty important for you to stand up today and commit to supporting women's legally entrenched right to choose. Will you remove abortion procedures from the cap on doctors' billings, or will you remain captive to the anti-woman sentiment often advanced by your colleagues in the backbench?

Hon Mrs Witmer: We will continue to ensure that patient access to needed services is provided, certainly not compromised. In fact, when you refer to the fact that there were some changes made to the threshold, I would just like to indicate to you that the specialist retention initiative allows specialists to apply for exemption from the threshold. This initiative allows us to address any possible access issues, and specialists' services will certainly continue to be provided.

I think it is important to know that the specialist threshold is \$380,000. Billings in excess of the threshold then will be reduced. But it's our understanding that most physicians had not reached their threshold when the exemptions took effect —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: — and I can assure you that access to services is not in any way going to be compromised. There will be an opportunity —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East): My question today is for the Minister of Labour. The minister recently came to my riding and spoke to some people there. One of the things he discussed of interest to the people of my riding and across the province was the question of workplace health and safety. I wonder if the minister could inform us of what things the ministry has done to ensure that there is workplace safety.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour): My number one priority as Minister of Labour is the health and safety of our workplaces in Ontario. I'm proud of the ministry's accomplishments —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Hon Mr Flaherty: I'm proud of the efforts of our inspectors and our workers in the Ministry of Labour in occupational health and safety. The facts speak for themselves when I compare the record of the former government and the former ministry and the record today. The number of safety inspections was just over 28,000 in 1995, and this year, over 47,000 safety inspections. That's a 58% increase from 1995 to the present. The number of field visits as well — as I say, the facts speak for themselves here — over 44,000 in 1995 and over 63,000 in 1998, which is a 41% increase.

We are committed to safe workplaces in Ontario and this is a government that keeps its commitments.

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Mr Doyle: I'd like to ask the minister, what effect have these increased inspections had on occurrences of workplace accidents in the province?

Hon Mr Flaherty: When we first took office in 1995 we made a commitment, and that was to reduce the lost-time injury rate resulting from workplace accidents in Ontario by 30% by the year 2000. We are measuring our compliance with that commitment. There has been a 17% reduction in the rate of lost-time injuries since 1995. That puts us on target to reach our overall goal of a 30% reduction by the year 2000. So we're on track on that commitment and we're measuring our performance on that commitment.

This government is ensuring that Ontario workplaces are among the safest in the world. We're working with municipalities and we're working with the private sector and the Safe Communities Foundation, a concept initiated by Paul Kells after he lost his 19-year-old son in an industrial accident. Over 12 communities in Ontario are now participating in the Safe Communities Foundation, most recently in Owen Sound and district. I was pleased to be there for the opening of that initiative. The Safe Communities Foundation is an outstanding, successful initiative, just one part of our efforts to make sure our workplaces are the safest in the world.

DEFIBRILLATION EQUIPMENT

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Health. I'm going to ask you about another area where your lack of action has caused a serious concern and crisis in health care in Ontario, and that is the issue of implantable cardiac defibrillators. These life-saving devices were rationed to hospitals across Ontario. You chose to give the Hamilton General funding for 50 of these defibrillators. These are life-saving machines which detect and treat life-threatening irregular heartbeats. These are essential, they work and they're very effective.

Minister, as of Thursday, Hamilton General Hospital ran out of these machines. They no longer have within the budget you allotted them these machines which save people's lives. You were notified in May that this crisis was coming and you were notified again in July. You have let it get to the stage where once again hospitals now have to choose between stopping this life-saving procedure for people or adding to their \$38-million debt. Can you tell us today why, since you've known since May that this was going to be a problem, you have failed to act with the proper money and funding to carry out the surgery?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): I've had an opportunity to meet with the hospital and they have certainly recognized, as have the other providers of cardiac care in the province, that this government has reinvested an additional \$65 million into cardiac care since 1995. This has enabled us to significantly reduce the waiting lists.

Also, if we talk particularly about the issue of the cardiac defibrillators, I can show you here that Hamilton received 29 in 1993-94, 32 the next year, 33 the next year, 35 in 1996-97. But let me say that in 1997-98 we provided 50 and we have indicated that we will continue to make those available.

Mr Agostino: You know this is fairly new technology, you know it's effective and that clearly the need is there. Fifty simply weren't enough; they need 100 to 110. You were told that in May. You were told that again in July. It's not limited to Hamilton. As of now, St Michael's Hospital in Toronto has run out of disks, and Toronto Hospital and the London Health Sciences Centre have run out as well. So you can't send patients to other hospitals, because they don't have the equipment either.

Minister, it sounds wonderful to talk about how much you've reinvested and how much you've put back into health care, but the reality is that as of today, you have basically denied patients in Ontario this life-saving device as a result of your lack of action. You can talk about the \$65 million or the \$100 million, but it doesn't help the person who walks into or is brought by ambulance to St Michael's or to the Hamilton General and needs this life-saving procedure today.

Again I ask you, will you stand up today and guarantee that you will immediately free up all the necessary funds to ensure that anybody who needs one of these heart-saving and life-saving devices in Ontario will get one?

Will you make that commitment today and send the money out today so hospitals can get on with the job?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I don't think the member heard my response. I indicated that we had provided 50 already this year to Hamilton; that was up from 35 last year. In the province in 1996-97 there were 183 provided; this year 273. I also indicated to you that we will be providing the additional.

Let me just remind you that our \$65 million has enabled us to provide 16,000 life-saving procedures this year, for a total of 60,000. That's what our \$65 million is doing for us in this province. If you people had been in office, you weren't prepared to reinvest, and we wouldn't have seen those additional 16,000 life-saving procedures.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): My question is for the Minister of Health as well. On June 15, you were in Windsor making an announcement about capital funding for the hospitals in our area. We've been waiting ever since for an announcement with respect to operating funds and we're still waiting — no announcement.

This past summer, 230 times ambulances couldn't discharge patients into emergency rooms because of gridlock. Hospitals are operating at a deficit. When can we expect an announcement about operating funds for Windsor hospitals?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): The member knows full well that we did provide additional money to the Windsor hospitals to help them with the emergency room situation. We continue to meet with the hospitals, and I can certainly give you my assurance that we will continue to work co-operatively with the hospitals. We need to continue to ensure that if money is provided to the hospitals, provided to support the emergency room services, indeed the money is being used effectively. So we will continue, as we have in the past, to provide the money to Windsor and elsewhere. As I say, we already provided you with additional money ahead of time, because we recognized the urgency of the situation.

Mr Lessard: Minister, meetings are not good enough. Funding for emergency rooms and for bricks and mortar is not going to improve health care in Windsor without funds for operating, without funds for nurses in our hospitals, without funds to operate the equipment in our hospitals. Once again, when are you going to announce operating funding for Windsor hospitals?

Hon Mrs Witmer: We have invested a considerable amount of money already in the Windsor-Essex community. In fact, spending has increased by \$131.9 million. We are restructuring the system to ensure that your constituents in the Windsor-Essex community receive the money that is needed.

Let me just tell you about the investments we've made: to priority programs — cardiac, trauma — over \$6 million; in eating disorders programs, \$281,000; in hospital transitional funding, \$4.5 million —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: — in Healthy Babies, almost \$600,000; diabetes complications prevention strategy, \$170,000; in additional Ontario drug benefit spending, \$3,620 million; in additional OHIP payments to physicians in your community —

The Speaker: Thank you.

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): My question is to the minister responsible for children's issues. I know you're a parent and a grandparent and I know just how important children are in your life. You also know that I'm the parent of five children. We know the options for caring for young children today.

In my riding of Durham, some young families are choosing to send their children to junior kindergarten and others are choosing community-based programs such as local nursery schools. I know that junior kindergarten is not offered by all boards across the province. Are there other government-funded programs available to replace these programs?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [children's issues]): I'm very happy to answer the question from the member for Durham East. All children need an opportunity to learn and grow, and parents like to encourage this desire to learn.

This government will guarantee funding for early learning programs, including junior kindergarten, to make sure that all children can have a successful start in their schools.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I asked you last week and you refused to answer.

Hon Mrs Marland: All boards have the opportunity to offer junior kindergarten to their families, which is what I told the member for Algoma last week, and the majority of boards have chosen to make this program available. While some boards have opted not to offer junior kindergarten, they are receiving an equivalent amount of funding in an early learning grant. This will enable them to offer other early learning programs for students in senior kindergarten through grade 3.

Mr O'Toole: I'm pleased to hear that you are very supportive of a variety of government-funded programs to promote early learning. That's very reassuring from you, as the minister for children.

All parents want to ensure that they're making the best possible choices for their children and their children's future. Clearly your answer reassures me that there is information out there that parents need to know. How do today's parents know that their children are learning in kindergarten, and what is their government doing to provide them with all the information they need to know about kindergarten programs?

Hon Mrs Marland: You're right; parents want ample information before they decide on the best course for their children. I'm happy to say that this government has made some important enhancements to kindergarten that will

provide parents with the information they need to make smart choices for their families.

For the first time in over 50 years, the Ministry of Education has introduced a program specifically designed for kindergarten students. This program sets out clear and specific learning expectations so that parents know what their child should be learning and can keep track of their progress. While it sets out guidelines in language, mathematics, art, personal and social development and science and technology, teachers will still have the flexibility to cater the program to the individual needs of their young students.

We want to ensure that all children have access to a program that stimulates their mind and enhances their enthusiasm, and our new kindergarten program helps get children off to a great lifetime of learning.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I'd like to express my dissatisfaction with the answers given today by the Minister of Health concerning the unconscionable delays in funding emergencies and to deal with the government cutbacks, and I'd like to request a late show.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): File the appropriate papers.

PETITIONS

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas prostate cancer is the fourth-leading cause of fatal cancer in Ontario;

"Whereas prostate cancer is the second-leading cause of fatal cancer for males;

"Whereas early detection is one of the best tools for being victorious in our battle against cancer; and

"Whereas the early detection blood test known as PSA, which is prostate-specific antigen, is one of the most effective tests at diagnosing early prostate cancer;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to encourage the Minister of Health to have this test added to the list of services covered by OHIP and that this be done immediately in order for us to save lives and to beat prostate cancer."

Of course I affix my signature to this petition.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Bob Wood (London South): I have a petition signed by 50 people.

"Whereas most Ontario residents do not have adequate access to effective palliative care in time of need;

"Whereas meeting the needs of Ontarians of all ages for relief of preventable pain and suffering, as well as the provision of emotional and spiritual support, should be a priority to our health care system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to resolve that a task force be appointed to develop a palliative care bill of rights that would ensure the best possible treatment, care, protection and support for Ontario citizens and their families in time of need.

"The task force should include palliative care experts in pain management, community palliative care and ethics in order to determine effective safeguards for the right to life and care of individuals who cannot or who can no longer decide issues of medical care for themselves.

"The appointed task force would provide interim reports to the government and the public and continue in existence to review the implementation of its recommendations."

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the hospital restructuring commission established by the Mike Harris government is deliberating in secret about the future of hospitals in the Niagara region and is expected to report in the autumn of this year;

"Whereas the St Catharines General Hospital, the Hotel Dieu Hospital and the Shaver Hospital, along with the Niagara rehabilitation centre, have in the past provided excellent medical care for the people of St Catharines;

"Whereas the Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital, the Douglas Memorial Hospital in Fort Erie, the Port Colborne hospital and the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby have been key centres of health care in the Niagara Peninsula;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to maintain existing medical services provided at these hospitals, restore the proposed \$43-million cut from operating funds for the Niagara hospitals; and

"That the Ontario Ministry of Health provide additional funding to expand health care services available in the Niagara region for residents in the Niagara Peninsula."

I affix my signature, as I'm in complete agreement with this petition.

ABORTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of the Honourable Janet Ecker, as she is unable to present a petition. The petition is from the Knights of Columbus, council 6161, in Pickering, Ontario. It's signed by Barry Macmillan. I will read it for the record. It's very short.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury, or illness, and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

I'm going to sign my name to this.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have a petition here that reads:

"The Health Services Restructuring Commission, HSRC, has given notice that it intends to direct the Hotel Dieu Hospital to close and to require that the Sisters of St Joseph cease to govern. If the proposed direction is made and implemented, then access to high-quality health care will be seriously undermined in Kingston and region.

"The sisters are recognized for their leadership in the health care community. They have developed the plan for and operated an efficient outpatient teaching hospital and have provided a high quality of patient care for 123 years from the same location. Their distinct values and philosophy, coupled with the sisters' tradition of compassionate care, must not disappear.

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"The HSRC's proposed direction calls for the dismissal of the sisters from their role in the governance in outpatient health care at the Hotel Dieu Hospital. This is not in the best interests of the patients and families in this city and region. The people of Kingston deserve to have access to the kind of quality health care for which the sisters are well recognized.

"Those who must use public transportation to get to outpatient clinics will be seriously affected. Taxpayers should not have to shoulder any extra burden in paying for a new outpatient facility, when the Hotel Dieu site can accommodate the needs of the people of Kingston. Many downtown businesses will suffer greatly should the site be closed.

"The sisters of Hotel Dieu Hospital are asking you to help them in their response to the commission," by signing this petition.

I affix my signature to this petition.

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT RESTRUCTURING

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): These are petitions gathered at the Norfolk County Fair asking for legislation to freeze taxes and eliminate regional government in Haldimand-Norfolk. The signatures are from Simcoe, Port

Dover, Turkey Point, Port Ryerse, Waterford and elsewhere.

"Whereas the Haldimand-Norfolk region has down-loaded a 17% tax hike on residents, without attempting to cut its own costs; and

"Whereas for the past 25 years, there have been meetings, petitions, referenda, and studies calling for a restructuring of regional government; and

"Whereas 80% of the residents did not want regional government in the first place, and in recent referenda, 75% of the residents of the city of Nanticoke and 60% of the residents of the town of Simcoe voted against retaining regional government; and

"Whereas residents in the region do not want and clearly cannot afford two levels of municipal government;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request that provincial legislation be passed to freeze taxes and eliminate regional government in Haldimand-Norfolk, and institute a form of restructured local government in keeping with the wishes and the financial means of the local residents."

I sign this petition.

DIABETES EDUCATION SERVICES

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Diabetes Education Service in Kenora is a necessary program; and

"Whereas the Harris government has refused to provide long-term funding for the program in Kenora; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has acknowledged that the program is cost-effective given the volume of clients seen and the degree of specialization required;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, join our MPP, Frank Miclash, in calling upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the Harris government provide long-term, stable funding to the Diabetes Education Service in Kenora."

I have attached my name to that petition as well.

GERMAN HERITAGE

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the people of German descent have been a part of Ontario's history since the days of pre-Confederation; and

"Whereas the German culture has always been an integral component of the cultural mosaic of Ontario; and

"Whereas we wish to demonstrate official recognition of the positive contribution of German heritage in the province of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to pass the bill entitled the German Pioneers Day Act and we respectfully petition the government of Ontario to designate the day following Thanksgiving Day as the date of the annual German Pioneers Day."

This is a petition that has been signed by citizens from all around Ontario as well as a visitor from Germany, and I am pleased to add my signature.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The member for St Catharines-Brock and I support this petition, I believe. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has announced its intention of dumping the financing for ambulances, social housing and public health care services on to the backs of municipalities; and

"Whereas this irresponsible action will create a shortfall of more than \$18 million for local governments in St Catharines and the Niagara region; and

"Whereas local representatives in St Catharines and the Niagara region will be forced to either raise property taxes by as much as \$200 per household or cut services; and

"Whereas Mike Harris called municipal representatives 'whiners' when they tried to explain to him that his proposal was unfair and would create gaps in important services such as the delivery of public health care; and

"Whereas the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing accused local representatives of being opportunistic simply because they attempted to point out that the Mike Harris proposal was unfair and primarily designed to fund his ill-advised tax scheme; and

"Whereas the Harris government refuses to listen to the representatives who work most closely with their constituents"; that is, the municipal representatives;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Mike Harris government to scrap its downloading plan, which will cause either an increase in property taxes or an unacceptable cut to important local services."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement with this petition.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): "Whereas the Mike Harris government is placing a greater emphasis on community-based health services in order to better care for an aging population; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is eliminating waste and duplication in the health care sector and reinvesting every penny" we find "into quality services; and

"Whereas this has resulted in reinvestments of over \$3 billion; and

"Whereas seniors will benefit from the government's \$1.2-billion investment to increase seniors' beds by 35%, including 2,200 new beds in Toronto alone; and

"Whereas \$75 million is being invested over the next two years to open hospital beds during peak demand periods in order to handle emergency patients; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government created Cancer Care Ontario to coordinate and integrate cancer treatment services province-wide; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has pledged \$24.3 million to dramatically expand breast cancer screening; and

"Whereas 140,000 additional low-income earners are eligible to receive help with their drug costs through the expansion of the Trillium drug plan; and

"Whereas over 520 prescription drugs have been added to the Ontario drug plan formulary, giving seniors and others who rely on the ODB program a wider range of products to serve their health care needs; and

"Whereas the increase in senior care beds is expected to create 27,500 new jobs in the health care industry; and

"Whereas residents of over 20 Ontario communities have received new or expanded life-saving kidney dialysis service through investments by the Mike Harris government; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has provided a \$12-million increase in funding so that people being treated in the United States for Ontario-based acquired brain injury treatment can be brought home; and

"Whereas patients in 23 communities have received funding for magnetic resonance imaging units from the Mike Harris government; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has established one-window community care access centres so that one phone call will get clients and their families the information, referral and personal service they need for Ontario's long-term-care system; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has committed \$7.3 million over five years for a nurse practitioner university program that will bring about more jobs for nurses and improve access to primary care services; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government established the women's health council to advise the government on how to improve health care services and standards for women; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has become the first in Canada to implement a province-wide measles vaccination program for school-aged kids; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has restored the \$400-per-day OHIP rate for out-of-country emergency inpatient hospital services, which had been reduced by the NDP government; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is cutting waste and duplication in the education system and refocusing education resources back into the classroom where they belong; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has set up a new student-focused funding formula which defines and protects classroom spending; and

"Whereas the new formula will result in a \$583-million increase in spending in classrooms by the year 2000; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has committed to maintaining spending for the next three years on supply teachers, classroom supplies, computers, professionals, paraprofessionals and staff development for the Toronto

District School Board. There will be no cuts in the classroom except for those made by the board's trustees themselves; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is increasing spending on classroom teachers and library and guidance services to the Toronto District School Board in each of the next three years, by \$45 million this year, a further \$20 million next year and a further \$17 million the year after that; and" —

Interjection.

Mr Gilchrist: It's a petition. I must introduce it.

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has brought equity in education funding so that all students, no matter whether they attend a public or separate school, will be treated equally; and

"Whereas the Toronto Catholic District School Board will have \$33 million more to spend this year in the classroom, thanks to the Mike Harris government's new education funding formula; and

"Whereas the Toronto District School Board has already announced it will be hiring 400 new teachers this year; and

"Whereas the Toronto Catholic District School Board has announced it will be hiring 340 new teachers this year; and

"Whereas the other school boards, such as Waterloo Catholic District School Board, have announced they will be hiring new teachers this year; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government's early retirement incentive program for teachers has resulted in the rejuvenation of teaching rosters across the province and created thousands of jobs for new, young teachers in Ontario;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to proceed with fulfilling the commitments made in the Common Sense Revolution and continuing to pursue policies which will make Ontario the best place to live, work, invest and raise a family."

I'm pleased to affix my signature.

1520

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER AND LOBBYISTS

STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 CONCERNANT LE COMMISSAIRE À L'INTÉGRITÉ ET LES LOBBYISTES

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 69, An Act to amend the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 and to enact the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur l'intégrité des députés et édictant la Loi de 1998 sur l'enregistrement des lobbyistes.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to participate in the debate on Bill 69, which represents, on the part of this government, a very modest attempt to regulate lobbyists here in the province of Ontario. It is a bill which frankly should have been introduced as one of the very first acts of Parliament of this government, especially given what has gone on over the last three years. But here we are, even though it's late in the day, dealing with a bill that attempts in a small way to assure the public that there will be in place measures to protect the public interest and that the public will have access to information about who is lobbying the government of the day, who they are being paid by and what kind of relationship they are involved in with the government of the day, so the public can have some idea, when deals are made and policies are changed, about just who has been there at the door of the government trying to get those things done and, if someone has benefited, how and by how much and why.

It's really important that we're dealing with this legislation, because as I look at what is happening across the border and the enormous power and influence of lobbyists in the American system, I am extremely concerned about just how well the public interest is being protected. It is certainly a road down which I hope we do not go. I hope this is a first step to guaranteeing that the enormous power, enormous influence and frankly the enormous wealth that is attached to lobbyists in the US doesn't become part and parcel of the democratic process here in this country or this province.

I look, for example, at the tremendous lobby effort by the tobacco industry in the United States, how powerful that has been, how much money has gone into individual campaigns and what American public policy is like around this important issue, and I have to shake my head wondering how the American system could have got into such a state to allow that kind of power and influence.

You look also at the power of the insurance companies, particularly those dealing with health care in the United States, a country where by far, in large measure, most people don't have access to adequate health care or where the access they have is inadequate and the coverage is not adequate to meet their needs, where individuals spend thousands and thousands of dollars when a family member gets hurt or gets sick to pay for coverage which in this country and this province we take for granted. Again, if you look at who is lobbying, at how much money is going into campaigns and at how much money is going to those people who represent people in the US, you have to wonder if that's a road we really want to go down, to have those kinds of policies in place which do nothing to protect the public interest but do everything to protect corporate interests.

This is an important first step, but there are a number of shortcomings in the legislation which I hope to address. I want to say that I think more and more the public, not only in this province and in this country, do worry about who is influencing their government; are concerned about the link between money going into campaign coffers and govern-

ment policies as a result; are very worried about how much money lobbyists are being paid to lobby government officials and to influence decision-making; and are very concerned that they, as the public, have some kind of access to that information so they can see what is happening and they can make decisions about the relationship and the link between lobbyists and changes in government policy or awarding of government contracts.

Therefore, it's incumbent upon this Legislature to make sure that the legislation put into place does protect the public interest and does provide the public with some guarantee that all the concerns they have around lobbyists and money and influence and decision-making are concerns that are going to be met. The public needs to be assured that the process we put in place to register lobbyists will be a transparent one, that everyone who should be covered will be covered, that the rules will not be different for different categories of lobbyists, that people who lobby by written communication should still be registered and that what they're lobbying about should be a matter for the public record. It's really important that if we're going to put legislation in place in this province, we use this opportunity in a way in which the public will feel confident that the legislation is transparent, that the legislation is in place to protect the greater public interest, not a corporate interest, and that the public will be able to have access to all the information about who is making deals, what kind of deals are being made, how much people are being paid to make those deals and who benefits.

One would hope that the legislation then, if it would do all those things, would in fact temper the relationship between corporate lobbyists and other lobbyists in government; would ensure, because the system is transparent or the process is transparent, that those attempts at impropriety are going to be curbed; will make sure there will be much and greater accountability between government decision-making and the awarding of government contracts or changes in government policy which influence certain groups.

We need to be sure that not only do we put in place a process that is very public and very transparent, but that all the concerns the public has around what is happening, who is being lobbied for what, and why, and for how much money, are clearly made available to the public. That's why I have a couple of concerns about what the bill doesn't do.

If you look in clause 3(2)(c), it says very clearly that written and oral submissions that are requested by the government will not be covered. Specifically, it says that this doesn't apply with respect to "any oral or written submission made to a public office holder by an individual on behalf of a person, partnership or organization, in direct response to a written request from a public office holder...."

The question I have is, why not? Why would we treat information that comes in, even in oral or written form, at the request of a public office holder as information that's not worthy of being registered? That information would be very important to determine what kind of requests are

being made of government office holders, and why. Who would benefit? How would they benefit? That kind of information, regardless of the fact that it is being requested orally or in written form, should not be information that is not available to the public, that is not registered. We cannot have different categories of information that will be registered or different forms of registration for lobbyists. If we're going to guarantee that this is a process that is disclosed, that can undergo public scrutiny, that kind of information has to be registered too.

1530

Second, in subsection 4(1) the government allows a lobbyist some 10 days to file as a lobbyist after he or she begins to lobby. I don't think that makes any sense at all. If we have someone who comes to this place who is paid to lobby, whose business it is to influence government and government decision-making, then from the very first day that individual starts as a lobbyist, that should be filed, the public should know. There is no reason that we would allow a waiting period or a cooling-off period or any kind of period at all before that person has to be registered and before we know what their relationship, what their link to the government is and what kinds of activities they're involved in.

Frankly, depending on what that lobbyist is about and depending on the legislation in hand or the contract in hand, someone's business could be done 10 days before they would actually have to file. I think there should be no waiting period whatsoever. If you are coming here with a specific intent to be a lobbyist, if you are paid to do that, then from day one, the moment you take on that position, the moment you start to be paid to do that, you should have to be registered and everyone should know that is in place.

Third, subsection 18(a) exempts any persons who have been appointed from the definition of "public office holder." This is in the regulation section and it allows the Lieutenant Governor to, after the legislation is put in place, exempt any person who has been appointed from that particular definition of public office holder. I don't know why we want to get ourselves into a position of allowing that kind of discretion to be held in the hands of, obviously, cabinet. It seems to me that we want to have in place the broadest, widest possible definition of public office holder and we should not be allowing exemptions from same.

For example, there are any number of government agencies, boards and commissions that either deal with dealing out quite large sums of public money or deal with information or policy or make rules or make changes that are very important to the public. If you look at the Ontario Energy Board, for example, they will have a major role to play with the deregulation of Ontario Hydro in terms of their role involved in the setting of fees, setting of licences etc. Surely we don't want to find ourselves in a position of exempting an agency of the government that will have this kind of power, under a change being made by this government, from this legislation.

Surely we want to be clear. We want to be very clear that not only cabinet ministers, public office holders and bureaucrats but those who are attached to the agencies, boards and commissions of this government have the same rule apply to them. They cannot at any point be exempt, because in doing that we could allow for any number of people who could benefit from any great amount of money that some of these agencies, boards and commissions deal with or from the power to set rules and regulations they have. People could benefit by that and the public wouldn't know. I don't think we want to be in a position where we allow that loophole to remain unchanged or unclosed.

In broader terms, the government has already said that the legislation is patterned on the federal legislation that was passed by Brian Mulroney. In that regard, it's interesting to note that in the 10 years that the legislation has been in place, there has never been a violation. You can take two things from that: One, that the legislation itself is so effective that it has curbed any attempt at impropriety — one would hope that would be the case; or on the other hand, you could worry that this proves that the legislation has not been tough enough and that there are loopholes that continue to exist which allow for the kind of benefit to be granted to lobbyists that we are trying to work against.

In that regard, I note that an Ottawa-based group called Democracy Watch in June 1996 made a number of recommendations regarding the federal legislation. In fact, they did a report card on the federal government with respect to their lobbyist legislation and a number of other pieces of legislation that deal with ethics and integrity. Specifically, though, with respect to the federal government legislation on lobbying reform, the feds were given a grade of F. Democracy Watch said the following: "After one and a half years, the government passed legislation requiring lobbyists to disclose more detailed information about their activities, but failed to require key information to be disclosed and created a huge loophole for lobbyists to escape registration. One year later, the ethics councillor has yet to release his draft lobbyist code of ethics."

The group Democracy Watch made a number of recommendations, which the federal government has yet to put in place, to try and restore some integrity in the system and to be clear that those loopholes that are in place could be closed. I worry that if this government is patterning its legislation after flawed federal legislation, you should use the opportunity now, as we develop this bill, to make sure that we put in place those items around disclosure which will truly capture those people who have to be captured and defined as lobbyists, and will capture elements around disclosure and public access to information that obviously are not in place at the federal level.

Specifically, Democracy Watch has urged the following:

First, that the government repeal the sections of Bill C-43 that treat lobbyists differently in terms of disclosure requirements and replace them with requirements applicable equally to all lobbyists, as in all lobby disclosure laws in the US.

Second, that we repeal the provision that does not require registration if a lobbyist receives a written invitation from a public official to attend a meeting or make a submission.

I referred earlier in my remarks to that very clause in this legislation that allows a similar problem in the Ontario legislation. This is exactly what this group has urged the federal government to close. It is the same loophole that now appears in this legislation. It makes no sense to not cover written or oral submissions under the registration for lobbyists.

Third, under the lobbyist's code of conduct, require lobbyists to disclose how much they spend on lobbying campaigns and require lobbyists to disclose past, paid and volunteer work with any government or political party and put all of this information in the registry of lobbyists.

That makes good sense. It's important for the public to understand how much money some people might be paid to do the job of lobbying government, influencing government's decisions or trying to get government awards. I think it's a critical part of this legislation. I suspect there's very big money involved in some of what goes on and the public should have every opportunity to know that kind of information, particularly how much someone is being paid so they can make judgments about how open the process is and whether the decision-making and the awarding of contracts are above-board or whether someone is influencing and benefiting enormously from that influence.

Fourth, require ministers and senior public officials to disclose their contacts with lobbyists and put this information in the registry of lobbyists.

Again that would work to give the public some comfort that the people whom they elect to make decisions on their behalf in fact are being open, up front, above-board about who they are meeting with, what they are meeting about and what the consequences are of those meetings, particularly with respect to changes in government policy, particularly with respect to the awarding of contracts. Those are some of the changes this government should make with this legislation if you're going to put in place any kind of bill that actually deals with people's concerns about who is lobbying, what for, how much they're being paid and what benefit they're getting back.

It's interesting that the timing of this legislation comes now, three years after this government has been in this place. It seems to me it has given this government the opportunity over the last three years, because no legislation has been in place, to ensure that any number of friends of this government have benefited in a way that the public might not be aware of and that the public is probably terribly concerned about.

It's interesting to note that the government has gone and allowed any number of its friends to do quite well with respect to government contracts, and yet there has been no legislation in place to have that registered, to have that put in the public domain. People should ask, should we have had this in place before someone like Tom Long, for example, received a contract for US\$250,000 to find a new CEO for Ontario Hydro? Should it have been in place

before Leslie Noble, Conservative insider, sold some of her lobbying services to Ontario Hydro for \$84,000? Should it have been in place before a number of consultants who were involved in this government then were involved with some of those bidders who were bidding on the Niagara casino and actually got it?

Should these rules have been in place before those kinds of things happened? I suggest to you that they should have, because any bill that's going to work has to be a bill that has as its uppermost concern to protect the public interest, to make sure that what people are most concerned about, services and their money, is being protected.

1540

I think it's regrettable that we seem to be putting in place a bill that's a little late, given what's gone on in the last three years with this government as it has moved to privatize services, whether they be highway transport services, privatized jails, develop new casinos etc. We should have had something like this in place long ago so that the public could have seen very clearly what was happening as this government moved to privatize services and who was benefiting by those very moves of this very government.

It's high time that the bill has been put in place now. It requires many changes so that the public can be sure they will know who is lobbying, it will be clear how much they're being paid and it will be clear how much they're benefiting.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I'm pleased to provide some comments on the speech just given by the member for Sudbury East. I certainly thought she was very thoughtful in her comments and clearly has an interest in the subject and has read the legislation very carefully. I found her remarks quite helpful.

I also noticed quite a distinct flavour in her comments which was different from the earlier comments in this second reading debate given by her colleagues in the New Democratic Party, particularly the member for Cochrane South and the member for Windsor-Riverside, both of whom seemed to indicate a lack of enthusiasm for including in the registry some of the categories that are in the bill.

I want to point out to the member for Sudbury East that in fact the federal legislation is not entirely as was first drafted by the Mulroney government in 1988. There have been some significant changes to the federal legislation. In 1996 it was amended and tightened up. The number of categories of lobbyists was changed from two to three and our legislation is a reflection of the tougher, more comprehensive federal legislation.

I thought I would make a comment on one of the concerns the member raised, the issue of the 10-day period to comply. The member has been a minister and no doubt is probably more familiar with lobbying at that level than I am, but my understanding is that the federal legislation and our legislation have the 10-day period to reflect the possibility that there could be some spontaneous lobbying

take place, and we should be giving those people the opportunity to register after it occurs because in some cases they don't know when they're going to come in contact with a public official.

Interjection.

Mr Grimmett: The member for Fort York can laugh, but that is a distinct possibility and it's in the federal legislation.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): That's one of the biggest loopholes that exists in this legislation, a loophole you could drive a bus or a truck through. I would say to the government party that they should look more closely at the federal legislation, where there are standards that I think should be adhered to when it comes to legislation such as this.

One of the other big loopholes that appears in the provincial legislation is that there can be exemptions granted by order in council. By a simple cabinet decision, the entire Premier's office, ministers' offices and other sensitive departments can be exempt from the terms and conditions of this legislation, creating another big loophole.

One of the big problems we've seen with this government is assistants to ministers and assistants to the Premier who have worked on a first-hand basis on different briefs, different cases, different issues with the private sector. All of a sudden, you find an announcement and they're gone to the very company they were advising from the government standpoint, and now they're working for that company. I think that should be absolutely outlawed.

We should be making sure the public is safeguarded so that people in government service, whether on the political end or the bureaucratic end, have a long breathing space before they can jump ship, if you will, and go right into the very companies that were dealing with the government, because they bring with them very sensitive and secretive information in some cases that could be a tremendous benefit for those companies. I think you'd have to question the motivation of those companies in hiring those officials. It's because of that very sensitive knowledge they have of what's going on in government that they have become so valuable. I think that's an advantage they have over others, and that practice should be stopped.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I just wanted to compliment my colleague the member for Sudbury East for the fairly detailed analysis that she provided of this piece of legislation. In a short 20 minutes, she was able to go through the salient points, with example after example, that while certainly she sees and we see some merit in this legislation, it is a case of too little, too late.

What we've got here is a piece of legislation that tries to give the impression that we're toughening up the provisions around lobbyists, that there's going to be a provision now for lobbyists to register and for everybody to know who is influencing the government behind closed doors in terms of decisions they are making. We know, as the member for Sudbury East has pointed out, that if this legislation had been in place earlier, perhaps that might have been of some help in terms of giving the public a

better insight as to the kind of people who have been influencing decisions of this government.

She went on to point out, and I would want to concur with her, that while again this is better than not having any legislation, it's interesting that when you look at the parallel legislation, which is the federal legislation, in the 10 years that has been in place, there has not been anyone found to have been in violation of that legislation. That speaks some volume towards the fact that that legislation, on which this is modelled, does not have the kind of teeth that it should have and that, as my colleague pointed out, groups like Democracy Watch have pointed out should exist, things like requiring lobbyists to disclose how much money they spend, requiring ministers and senior public servants to disclose when they meet with lobbyists and things of that nature, which would make this really good, tough legislation.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I listened very intently to the member for Sudbury East and I noticed that she said the legislation was a little late and she questioned the motive. She said that it should have been a long time ago. I agree with her; it should have been a long time ago. Their party was in government for five years, and the party before that was in power for five years —

Interjections.

Mr Wettlaufer: Listen to the hullabaloo here, Mr Speaker. Just listen. Tell them a few facts and they get a little carried away, right? Ten years these two parties were in power and nothing happened. We've been in power for three years. I think the people of Ontario much preferred to see the budget balanced. They preferred to see tax cuts. They preferred to see education reforms. They preferred to see the reduction in size of government. I'd say this legislation is better late than never.

How successful is the strategy that we have been carrying out so far, the priorities that our government had to have? The Liberals in Quebec have announced what they are going to campaign on. Listen to this. This is in the Toronto Star today:

"There's another side to that coin," says Charest. "Harris is \$1.3 billion more for health care. Harris is 48% of all the jobs created in Canada since the government of Mr Bouchard is in place. Harris is economic growth that far surpasses anything that's going on in Quebec." I would add that that surpasses anything else that's been going on in Canada.

"Charest's economic plan also includes cutting back government regulation of the economy, making labour laws more 'flexible' so that employers can reorganize their workplaces, selling government shares in private corporations to reduce the debt and creating 'partnerships' with the private sector in a government infrastructure program."

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. The member for Sudbury East has two minutes to respond.

Ms Martel: Let me thank those who participated for their comments and let me say a couple of things.

With respect to the member for Kitchener and the timing of this, it probably should have been done in the 43 years of Conservative government that we had in this province before either the Liberals or the New Democrats had power in this province. There's no doubt this is long overdue. Certainly during that very long, long, long period of Conservative government and Conservative legislation, one would have hoped we would see something along this nature at that time.

1550

With respect to the comments from the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay about the fact that the reason we have a 10-day waiting period or cooling-off period, however you want to call it, is that it allows for spontaneous lobbying, I say to the member that there is nothing spontaneous about lobbying. Lobbying is very intentional, very deliberate. When people come to this place and want to talk to cabinet ministers or government bureaucrats, they know exactly what they want to talk about. They know what kind of legislation they want changed. They know what kind of government contract they want awarded. They know what public service they want privatized so they can get their hands on it.

I say to you, long before they get here or long before they finally get a meeting with a cabinet minister, they know exactly what they're about, what they want done, what they want changed, who is paying them to be here to try and get that changed, and probably some clear idea of how they're going to benefit. It makes no sense whatsoever to not have folks register immediately. If they want to come to Queen's Park and they want to influence decision-making, on day one that they arrive and start to do that they should be registered, because there is nothing spontaneous about what they're doing and who they're doing it for.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Wentworth —

Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East): I may have white hair like Mr Leach, but I'm not Mr Leach — far from it.

I am indeed happy today to be speaking on this bill, Bill 69, which is called the Lobbyists Registration Act. By introducing this legislation, the government is following through on a commitment to establish procedures to register all persons and firms who lobby with the government or government members.

This legislation is going to be enshrining four basic principles, and they're important to the province and to the people of the province. The importance of open access to government is one of them; the legitimacy of lobbying is another; the third is the need for public awareness of influences on government; and fourth, the registration procedures should not impede access to public office holders.

Mandatory registration of lobbyists supports our commitment to ensure that government activities are conducted openly, that they're conducted fairly and that they are clear and transparent.

This legislation would require lobbyists to register their identity and the names of their clients, and to declare their

lobbying activities on a government registry. The lobbyist registry would be accessible to the public on a government Web site as well to ensure that it's very accessible.

Not only are we the first Ontario government to take action to ensure that taxpayers' interests are protected, we're also the first provincial government across Canada to take this step, other than of course the federal government.

A mandatory registration process for lobbyists will allow the public to know who is being paid, and by whom, to influence government decision-making. Lobbyists would disclose information such as lobbyists' names and addresses, as I mentioned; clients' or employers' names and addresses; description of the specific legislative proposals, bills, regulations, policies, programs, grants, contributions or contracts sought; the names of the provincial ministries, agencies, boards and commissions that are being lobbied; the source and amount of government funding received by the lobbyists' client or employer; communication techniques that are being used, including grassroots techniques and grassroots communications. Corporations and organizations must also file information describing their business activities.

To ensure greater transparency, consultant lobbyists will also be required to report a number of things, including when they are communicating with public office holders in an attempt to influence the awarding of a contract on behalf of the crown and when they are arranging a meeting between public office holders and any other person.

There are some stiff fines here as well. We should point out the fines. Fines of \$25,000 would be allowed for violations, which would include, for example, failing to register. So if there is a 10-day waiting period, you would still have to register or face a fine of up to \$25,000. Making false or misleading statements would also make you subject to a very stiff fine. Knowingly placing a public office holder in a position of real or potential conflict of interest — don't do it; you could be fined. These fines are consistent with those imposed for similar violations in other Ontario statutes.

The bill will also provide a lobbyist registrar with authority for a number of things: administering the lobbyist registration process; requesting clarifications of information on a registration form or other document submitted; identifying omissions and inconsistencies and communicating with the lobbyist to ensure correction or to request supplementary information; providing advice and information about the proposed registration system to lobbyists, public office-holders, the general public and other groups; submitting annual reports to the minister for tabling in the Legislative Assembly; ensuring public accessibility to the information contained in that lobbyist registry.

The concept of openness underlies this legislation. All information that is registered with the government will become a part of the public record. This information will be posted on a lobbyist registry Web site. This Web site will enable lobbyists to file, to renew or to terminate their

registrations electronically. It will provide the public with on-line access to a database of approved registrations to search and to view. It will include reference sources for the Lobbyists Registration Act, regulations, interpretations, bulletins and other communications. Lobbyists who do not have access to the Internet will still be able to file paper forms with the government.

This proposed legislation will complement Ontario's conflict-of-interest standards, which were approved in December 1997. The government has fulfilled its promise and it has taken action to protect the public interest.

The introduction of this legislation is our commitment to conducting government business in a manner that ensures accountability to the taxpayer and to the province.

Some of the things I said may not have been expressed very clearly, but I would like to take a third source to point out the importance of this legislation. This is an editorial that appeared just recently in the *London Free Press*, and I would like to read the content of the editorial to show the need for such legislation. It reads:

"We do not know how many lobbyists are trying to influence government decision-making in the province of Ontario.

"We do not know who they are, and, most importantly, to whom they are speaking.

"We should know these things, as well as other details of the way they do business in the political backrooms and corridors of power in this province."

The *London Free Press* editorial goes on to say:

"If you ask those same questions of our federal government, the answers are readily available.

"In fact, 584 consultants and 367 company employees, representing 192 companies and 327 organizations, were registered as lobbying the federal government as of the end of March.

"The difference between the federal and provincial governments is the Lobbyists Registration Act, passed federally in 1989 and beefed up with greater power in 1996."

So it has been beefed up, and our bill is patterned on that.

The editorial goes on to say, "It is time that same kind of accountability and scrutiny be applied to provincial lobbyists." This is what we're doing.

It says, "The provincial government is trying to do just that in introducing a bill last week that would create a new lobbyists' registration office at Queen's Park."

The editorial goes on to say, "The registry would see individuals, businesses and agencies that lobby government required to register their names, those of their clients, the government offices they contact and describe their activities.

"They would even have to outline how they communicate with the government and make that information available on the Internet. Any firms that fail to register, register false information or knowingly put a government employee or politician in a political conflict of interest would face fines of up to \$25,000. Such a registration office is needed and is timely."

It goes on to say: "It is not an issue that grabs headlines or seizes the imagination of voters, but it can be integral to ensuring integrity in government.

"It makes government business more transparent and more accountable and that is necessary to help build trust.

"This idea has been discussed provincially for about 20 years" — so it is indeed overdue.

"Such a worthwhile investment in government accountability is long overdue."

This is a good bill. I'm pleased today that I was able to get up and speak to the House about this particular bill and I request some comments and suggestions from the other side.

1600

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): The member from the government side would like to make us believe that the legislation does mirror the federal standards, but as we've pointed out on a number of occasions, we have suggested that there's no code of conduct in this legislation to cover lobbyists' activities, a code of conduct which we think is very important. If this legislation were to mirror that of the federal government, it would certainly include that code of conduct.

As well, we know there are exemptions that can be granted by order in council in this legislation, again an area in which it does not parallel the federal legislation. We know that by a cabinet decision, the entire Premier's office, the minister's office or other departments can be exempt from the terms and conditions of the legislation. As was pointed out earlier, this certainly creates a large loophole in terms of this legislation.

As well, we know that the federal legislation has specific duties for the Integrity Commissioner, and the role of the Integrity Commissioner to investigate and review complaints under this legislation is totally subject to the direction of the cabinet.

As I indicated, this is by no means a close parallel to what we've seen operating in Ottawa for the past 10 years. It is these areas that we'd certainly like the present government to take a look at and maybe recognize how the federal legislation has been successful, but as well to include the three areas and the three discrepancies that I've just indicated.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I listened carefully to the comments of my friend from Wentworth East, and I mean that seriously, and I just have a couple of questions for him. Perhaps he could enlighten the House whether the government is going to allow this bill to go to committee and to have amendments, since he asked for suggestions from the opposition and was looking forward to hearing what they might be.

This legislation, he says, is patterned after the federal act which was passed 10 years ago. There never has been a single violation of that act. Not once has a lobbyist in Ottawa been found in violation of that act. That means that either the Mulroney government was squeaky clean or the legislation there has a lot of loopholes in it.

I would also like to point out that Democracy Watch, an Ottawa-based organization, has asked for changes to that legislation that include disclosing lobbyists' expenditures, including their fees and their costs of advertising. They suggest eliminating tax deductions for lobbying expenses. They would require ministers and senior staff to disclose who they meet with and eliminate the loophole that if an individual is invited to a meeting, then it's not considered lobbying.

That last one really blows my mind. It's not lobbying under that federal act as long as you are invited to the meeting. I suppose if you crash the meeting and they talk to you, then they're lobbying, but if you go as an invitee, then it's not considered lobbying. That seems like an awfully big loophole to me. Usually I don't meet with a lobbyist unless I've been invited to. It would seem to me that just about every time a lobbyist meets with me, under this act it wouldn't be considered lobbying.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I am very pleased to recognize the valuable contribution of statements made today by the member for Wentworth East. Bill 69 is very important to the integrity of every member in this House, and I think we do want to get it right. I would encourage the member for Algoma and all parties to bring forward ways that we can ensure that this device, this legislation, ensures the incorruptible business climate of this government. That's really, clearly why we've brought this bill in. We want to make improvements to the current federal Lobbyists Registration Act.

There are primarily three things that intrigued me when I took a very cursory look at it to see what were the obligations of the various participants: me as a member or, for instance, in the case of a minister, and the obligations on those people, whether it's the OMA or whatever organization that is trying to influence or at least get to members on all sides of the House. Just to clarify, I think it's very interesting: It requires the lobbyist to disclose the identity of the clients in the public registry. It's my understanding that it's going to be on-line. You'll be able to sign right on the computer and see what Lobby Company ABC is doing and who their contact people are. It will prohibit the public lobbyist from placing inaccurate or misleading information in the registry. There are obviously prohibitive signs. There are clearly repercussions. There are fines. It's my understanding that we will make it not only an offence, but there will be a punishment. It prohibits lobbyists from placing public office holders in a conflict-of-interest position.

Just these few points that I've articulated here have convinced me that this is the right thing to do, and if all members work together, we will have a better bill.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I'm pleased to hear the comments of the member for Wentworth East. He was making comparisons to the federal legislation and saying how it's an attempt to mirror that. Bill 69 doesn't even meet that test. It is not even as strong as the federal legislation; in fact, weaker. Most independent commentators would say that the federal lobbyist legislation is woefully inadequate, as proven by the point that nobody has ever

been prosecuted or even found in violation of the federal act.

Bill 69 is too little, too late, because most of the chief advisers who worked in the inner circle of the Premier have already left, and they've been working as full-time, highly paid lobbyists for some of the major consortiums that have done business with this government. It's ironic that now the government is bringing forth this legislation, two and a half years after it promised it, when in essence the chickens have all fled the coop.

It would have been a bit more meaningful, as weak as it is, if this had been introduced two and a half years ago when it was needed. Now, when most of the privatization has taken place — or a lot of it has, with our jails, our road maintenance contracts — they've all been left. Those big contracts I'm sure were heavily lobbied. It would be interesting if the member for Wentworth East would agree with me that maybe this bill should be retroactive to reveal all the lobbying and the millions of dollars that were probably spent by lobbyists on courting this government, and not the backbenchers so much. They go to the top. They to the Premier's inner circle. They're the ones who get lobbied because they are the ones who make the decisions on the contracts.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Wentworth East has two minutes to respond.

Mr Doyle: I would like to thank the member for Kenora, who commented today, the members for Algoma, for Durham East and for Oakwood. I would like to pass on a personal message to the member for Kenora that I did try to find an airplane engine for him but I didn't have any luck, so I give him my apologies for that, but I did put the word out.

I want to point out that we've been criticized a little bit for waiting too long to introduce this particular bill, and it was mentioned, "Better late than never." However, we've also been accused of moving too quickly on other bills. I don't think it's a situation where you can have it both ways. We truly can do only one bill at a time, and we are enacting this legislation.

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Bill 69, I might point out, does have some rather stiff fines for people who contravene the terms of the legislation. It certainly defines who a lobbyist is and whom he can lobby and so on and so forth. I think the legislation is good and it will be well received by the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Oakwood.

Mr Colle: It's my pleasure to rise and join the debate on Bill 69 as it relates to the registration of lobbyists. Members of the general public who perhaps feel this is a bill that doesn't affect them may not be that interested at this point in time in the impacts of Bill 69, but it is important for the public to be aware of the implications of this bill and the need to know about lobbyists.

In essence, when you have big government and highly centralized government — and this government has been one of the most highly centralized governments in North America — it is important for the public to be aware of

the fact that the more centralized power is in the hands of a few, like in this government, which is fairly totally centralized in the hands of the Premier's office, that the public knows this means less accountability, less access to the decision-makers by the ordinary taxpayer, the ordinary citizen who's affected by the laws this government makes.

The pattern of this government over the last three and a half years has been to continue to centralize power in the hands of the ministry, the Premier's advisers and the Premier's office. Therefore, if there is a bill coming up dealing with property taxation, for instance — it was ironic that when the first of six property tax bills was brought up by this government, it so happened that the big banks were given a \$300-million tax cut on their property taxes by the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Municipal Affairs. You ask yourself, "How did the big banks, despite all their profits, end up needing a \$300-million property tax cut?"

No doubt the ordinary person who has a shoe store or a grocery store or a flower shop on Main Street in Stratford or Kenora didn't get a chance to have lunch or play golf or go fishing with one of the ministers or one of the top bureaucrats who decided that the big banks were going to get a \$300-million tax cut. That's how decisions are made in this government: The big and powerful have full-time lobbyists. They could be lawyers, they could be accountants, they could be whatever. They dine at the Albany Club; they socialize at the fundraisers; they are in daily contact with members of the higher echelon of this government. It's probably not even, as I said, the backbenchers; it's the cabinet ministers, the deputy ministers and their faceless, unelected minions who essentially run this government.

That's what lobbying is all about. It's not about an organization or a citizen going to see their MPP; it's about a highly paid lawyer or a highly paid professional who has as his or her resources literally hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars to wine and dine and influence the decision-makers of government. As we speak right now, I wonder where the Premier is, whom he's dining or wining and meeting with. Is there a lobbyist now sitting with the Premier's advisers? The chances are there is a highly paid, highly sophisticated lobbyist now talking to one of the Premier's advisers about some piece of legislation. Those advisers to the Premier are not sitting down, as I said, with the ordinary taxpayer; they're sitting down at a table deciding the future of this province behind closed doors or in some fancy restaurant or at the Albany Club. That's how this government has shaped itself.

Now this government comes along and says, "We are going to bring in a bill to register lobbyists." As you know, this is a very weak bill. It's not even as strong as the weak bill in Ottawa where they've never caught anybody doing anything that they supposedly weren't supposed to do as a lobbyist. The government says, "We are going to pass similar type registration." There's not even an independent commission that's going to be viewing this. It's going to be part of the workload of the Integrity Commissioner, if I'm not mistaken.

There are going to be very few watchdogs, ensuring that these very slick and sophisticated lobbyists can continue to make all kinds of money at the expense of the public decision-making process. These lobbyists, as you know, Mr Speaker, when they go to fancy dining rooms and go on trips and everything to pay for lobbying undertakings, they can deduct those from their taxes when they do their business expenses. That's the ironic thing. When Joe Citizen comes to Queen's Park, he or she has to pay for that trip, for that car ride or that streetcar ticket to get here, and take time off work.

The high-priced lobbyists, and they are high-priced, can make anywhere up to \$1 million, \$2 million, \$3 million a year as lobbyists. We know the likes of Frank Moores who hung around Ottawa and the money he made. They can make millions. They can deduct the price of a flight to Toronto, the wining and dining, the golfing. All that is deductible, so the taxpayer gets stiffed twice. The taxpayer has to pay for the lobbyist who may influence the government in making a wrong decision, one that's harmful to the ordinary taxpayer, as I gave a case in point, to the mom-and-pop grocery store that got hammered with a property tax increase at the expense of the bank.

Not only do they get hit by losing those tax dollars because of the tax deductibility of the lobbyist's activity, but then there's a bad decision that could be made because Joe Jones or Jane Smith never got a chance to talk to the Guy Giornos of this world, the backroom decision-makers. They never get to see these people. They're invisible to the ordinary citizens, but the high-powered lobbyists are well-connected. We know they have boxes at the Blue Jays games. We know they have boxes at the Leaf's games. We know that half of the tickets at Maple Leaf Gardens are probably owned by lobbyists. That's how they work.

This bill will do nothing to control what the lobbyists do. There's not one lobbyist in this province who's shaking in their boots, I'll tell you. They've probably got a big smile on their face as they smoke their big, fat cigar and eat their blue steak in the bottom of some fancy restaurant down here in Toronto. They're smiling at this. You haven't heard one complaint from a lobbyist about Bill 69, because Bill 69 is essentially a piece of cake for the lobbyists. It should be called the Lobbyists Protection Act. It is meek. It is meaningless. It does nothing. It's not only too late; it's much too little.

Look at some of the things the government has already done. The privatization and giving out of road maintenance contracts: Most of the highways in Ontario were maintained by MTO officials, people who were public servants. They worked for the government and they took care of our roads. Good, bad or whatever, they did take care of our roads. Now a great number of those road contracts are in the hands of private companies, huge multinational private companies that are making millions of dollars with the maintenance of our roads. How did they get those contracts? Who lobbied the ministers? Who lobbied the backroom boys in the Premier's office to ensure those contracts were received by A, B, C or D company?

I'm not saying there was impropriety, but I would like to ask, why aren't all those contacts with the lobbyists of these companies, the lawyers and the high-priced talent, why would the government not retroactively release those names of the people who had those fancy dinners, who had those contacts with the deputy ministers and the ministers who made those decisions? You come along now and say, "We're now going to register those people," but they've already given out these contracts, huge chunks of highway all over southwestern Ontario. Those contracts worth millions of dollars have already been signed. Someone already did the lobbying. It's too late to do anything about that. Those deals were done.

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A lot of companies didn't get a fair shake because they didn't have the right lobbyists. You've got to get the best, the highest-paid lobbyists to get those contracts. They don't just come to you because your bid was the ideal bid. There's a lot of lobbying that takes place.

Things for casinos: I remember that at one point — it's hard to remember which casino deal — there was a casino deal a week announced here about six months ago. This government has awarded six consortiums the right to operate casinos in this province. I know that in my office we tried to get the names of the people in the consortiums who got the casino deals. You couldn't get that; no luck from any ministry. We searched every ministry, we looked through newspaper files, and nobody would even tell us who were the members of the consortium. Can you imagine trying to get the name of the lobbyist who helped get those contracts for those consortiums? I challenge the government to make those public: how those casino contracts were given to A, B, C or D Co, who made the interventions, how much they were paid to make the interventions. Who were these individuals who did the lobbying for the casino contracts in this province?

Who are the lobbyists who are doing the lobbying for the slot machines now? The government, as you know, is going to buy thousands of slot machines, putting them all over this province. Who is now talking to the government about which slot machine company will get the slot machine deal? We don't know. There is no way of knowing who these people are, what they've done, who they have lobbied, because the horse is out of the barn. They've already done that. Now the government says, "We're going to come along and they're going to have to register."

How about the hospital closings? There were all kinds of decisions made by this government to close hospitals. The question in a lot of people's minds still is, why were some hospitals closed and not others? I've got a hospital in my constituency, Northwestern hospital. It's a new hospital, about 25 years old, and it's sitting there empty except for one floor. Meanwhile, as you know, in Toronto people are being redirected from hospitals continually. I think for 17 of 19 hospitals over the last couple of days you couldn't get into emergency. They're on redirect. Yet Northwestern hospital and Doctors Hospital are sitting there basically empty. The emergency at Doctors and at

Northwestern have closed down. They say, "We wonder why we have a problem with emergency." Well, you've closed emergencies down. You've closed hospitals down. There's no home care. No wonder you've got people backed up in emergencies, in corridors and on stretchers, anywhere you go, and this government says, "Well, we had to close those hospitals."

Northwestern hospital, which they closed in my riding, is a new hospital. They decided to extend or expand another hospital up the street. People keep telling me: "The hospital they're going to expand or keep open" — I think it was called Humber Memorial and it's now called Humber River — "is in an impossible part of the city. You can't get to it. It's not on a major artery. There's no room to park." People can't even find the hospital, yet it got designated to stay open.

They're going to spend \$20 million expanding that hospital when they're closing the new one down the street. In fact, they're going to expropriate and bulldoze 10 homes next door to the hospital because they don't have enough room for parking. The old Northwestern site on Keele Street had 35 acres sitting there. So which hospital do they close? Do they close the small one or the one that had all the space and was modern? They decided they were going to close the new one and expand the one you can't get at, and they have to bulldoze homes to build a parking lot. And you can't get into the emergency now because it's overcrowded.

It would be interesting for the public if they were to know who lobbied on behalf of the hospital. I know as citizens we asked the guru of hospital closings, Mr Mark Rochon, or Mr Sinclair, the person in charge of closing hospitals: "Can we come and meet with you face to face? You're going to close our hospitals. We'd like to meet with you for a half-hour to ask you how you came to the decision on closing one hospital, our hospital."

They said, "We don't have time to meet with you." We asked for a half-hour to meet about the closing of the hospital that was built and paid for by ordinary citizens, who went door to door in the 1950s and 1960s collecting \$5, \$2 to build the hospital. Now this government comes along with its hit man, Mr Sinclair, and he says, "Your hospital is closed." He won't even meet with the MPP, the city councillors, never mind the citizens who are now lined up in the hospital corridors and can't get emergency. He wouldn't meet with them for a half-hour.

But rest assured that there were all kinds of lobbyists around this province being paid for lobbying to open or close different hospitals. I'd like to know who those people were and who they worked for. If they lobbied the Minister of Health, if they lobbied the backroom boys in the Premier's office, I'd like to know who those people were to make decisions that to the general public don't make sense economically or in a health or social capacity. They don't make sense, yet we, the public and MPPs, couldn't even get a half-hour with this guy Sinclair, who was appointed and paid for by this government to close 30-odd hospitals in this province and 10 in Toronto.

You can't get access to the decision-makers in this government. The ordinary citizen-taxpayer cannot get access. You try to make an appointment with a minister. Try to get an appointment with a minister. Try to get a letter back from a minister. Try to get some way in a decision-making situation. You can't get there. But you know who gets there: The lobbyists are there. They're not necessarily in this building. But as I said, the lobbyists have big bankrolls. They are well paid. Many of them I'm sure are very intelligent, capable people.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Would you check for a quorum, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Would you check for a quorum.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Oakwood.

Mr Colle: Many of the decisions that affect ordinary Ontarians, some which will affect them for generations to come, have already been made, and the sad part is, many of them were made without the input of ordinary citizens. As you know, this government has rammed bill after bill through this Legislature with hardly any input, without any proper public hearings. They just have railroaded so many bills through.

The whole thing about hospital closures, there was never even any debate or public hearings. There should have been public hearings across this province before they closed hospitals. They didn't have one public hearing before they decided to close 32 hospitals in this province. Before they decided to close the 10 hospitals in Toronto, they didn't have one public hearing. The government said: "We don't have to debate this in the Legislature. We don't have to have public hearings." You've got some far-off commission that nobody can get to who will make those decisions for you.

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That's what the government has done here. It has set up a government that's basically immune from public input. You can't get at them. In education, they're going to close up to 500 or 600 schools. How are we ever going to find out how these decisions are going to be made by this government? Are there going to be any public hearings before they close our local schools? Will this government have the guts to say, "We will listen to the public and not just to the lobbyists"? That would be an interesting challenge.

Before a public school is closed in this province, there should be a public hearing under the auspices of the Legislature. It would be very interesting to see what the government members would say when you would have to have a public process before you closed a school, because that's what this government is embarking on doing right now. It's embarking on closing schools that have been paid for by the taxpayers in all the municipalities across

this province. They pay for the schools. They help maintain them with their taxes. Now the government says: "We have this new, funny funding formula. We're going to close 500, 600 schools without any public hearings."

But I'll tell you who this government has listened to. It has listened to the high-priced lobbyists. Those people are the ones who have had the greatest influence on this government. We in the opposition know they don't listen to us in opposition. They don't listen to the public. They listen to the lobbyists.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): The member's time has expired. Questions and comments?

Mr Silipo: I want to commend the member for Oakwood for his comments on this bill and for outlining once again the need for this legislation — not so much this particular bill because, as he has said, and many of us are making the point, this legislation is quite frankly not tough enough. It doesn't go as far as it should in terms of establishing a real process for keeping tabs on who is lobbying on behalf of whom and for what favours or for what objectives.

We would want to see in place, as I'm sure he would, legislation that would actually keep the government of the day accountable, because this particular government, the Harris government, has made many decisions in the three and a half years that they've been in office where it would have been useful to have this type of legislation toughened up so that, as a group like Democracy Watch says, we would have known who was spending money to lobby on behalf of particular groups or individuals, who cabinet ministers were putting their heads together with to dream up various schemes.

Those are the kinds of things that I think the public would want to know in terms of being assured that decisions are being made by their government in an above-reproach way and that there is a process not just for registering, but also for knowing the extent to which certain groups or individuals would go to try to curry favour with the government of the day.

If we're serious at all about putting in place a lobbyist registration system and a real, effective enforcement system, that's the kind of approach we should be taking, not just something the Tories now want to bring in towards the end of the mandate so they can say they have done something about a problem that we all know has been around for a long time, but which quite frankly they have chosen for their own political agenda to not deal with until the very end of the mandate.

Mr Grimmett: I'm pleased to make some comments on the recent speech by the member for Oakwood. I listened intently as the member was making his remarks, a lot of remarks about powerful lobbyists and a lot of remarks about highways and roads.

I'll be charitable and say that the member has probably read the legislation. I think I'm being quite charitable in saying that, but I note from his comments that he's calling it the Lobbyists Protection Act, so I assume he's not going to support the legislation, which makes an interesting contrast with many of the speakers from the Liberal Party

who have indicated that they will be supporting the legislation.

His comments are that it's too little, too late. There was lots of time for the Peterson Liberals to pass such legislation. The federal Conservative government brought in lobbyist registration legislation in 1988. It has since been amended by your Liberal cousins in 1996. It has been toughened up considerably. We have adopted virtually identical legislation to what is in place federally. Bill 69 reflects the federal legislation. It has the same categories for lobbyists; it has the same provisions as far as the time in which they register.

I understand why the member for Oakwood seems to have a particular interest in lobbyists and powerful lobbying organizations. I notice that just this week or just recently a major lobbying firm, Hill and Knowlton, hired another person who worked in government. The person's name is Silvia Presenza. I'm interested in who Silvia used to work for, so I went to inquire. She used to work for the member for Oakwood. So the member does understand why it is necessary to register the names of such people. I certainly hope the member will indicate that he's supporting the legislation.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I want to commend the member for Oakwood for his excellent presentation. In his presentation I could identify the frustration he has about this legislation. As he indicated to the government side, this is too little, too late. As a matter of fact, it doesn't do anything for the real people who are lobbying this government and getting all the great benefits from the government. I want to commend him.

What he's saying too, which the members on the opposite side don't seem to get, is that if they really want serious legislation, they should take a very serious look at putting in something that is much tighter and better and focused on those who are lobbying the government and getting the greatest benefits. But this doesn't do a thing, nothing, for those who continue to have this great access to government. So I want to commend him on that.

I want to commend him also for pointing out the inadequacy of the entire legislation. People who really need access are denied access. People who have real concerns don't get a chance to see the government. I'm talking about issues and concerns that affect people's livelihood in the sense of how they live and issues they have to deal with each day. Those who are lobbying the government, who have the big pockets and large funds and lots of money, continue to have that great access. They pick the phone up and phone their little colleagues the ministers, and that's it. As the member pointed out, for the individual outside who would like to speak to their member of Parliament who is a minister, there is no way, or those who have projects and would like to get through, because of the inadequacy of how the process works, don't get through.

I want to commend the member for pointing these things out to the House.

Mr Wildman: I want to congratulate the member for Oakwood on his remarks. I hope he would give us some clarity as to whether, in his view or the view of his party,

there should be committee on this bill and what amendments might be put forward in committee. I think it's really apropos that we are dealing with this legislation today, on the same day the minister for privatization introduced a bill that would privatize Highway 407.

Mr Colle: It's already private.

Mr Wildman: Yes, it's already private. I wonder what this means in terms of the role of the former member of the Premier's staff who is working for the corporation that is operating Highway 407. I just wonder if that has anything to do with the new legislation and I wonder what this bill would do about those kinds of relationships. I don't think it would do anything.

I'm in favour of this kind of legislation, but I hope we have hearings, because I believe there need to be some amendments. We need to know not just who the lobbyists are, but how much they're being paid, by whom, and what kind of expenses they are filing for. We need to know also how we can determine what the definition of lobbying is, because under the federal legislation, as I understand it, if an individual is invited to a meeting, it isn't considered lobbying. As I've said before, usually when a lobbyist wants to meet with me, he or she invites me to the meeting, but under this legislation it appears that would not be counted as lobbying.

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Mr Colle: I'd like to thank my colleagues for their comments: the members for Dovercourt, Muskoka-Georgian Bay, Scarborough North and Algoma. I do personally think there should be hearings on this and I think there should be amendments, because I agree that this bill is basically a Lobbyists Protection Act, so I hope there are. I will urge my party to do so.

I just want to say that this bill is about this government and its style. This government, as I said, was unprecedented in its initiation with Bill 26, when it totally took power out of the hands of the Legislature. With the rule changes, it has done that. When it takes power out of the hands of the Legislature, it takes power away from the people. That's what this government has done, unlike any other government in the history of Canada, provincial or federal.

It is even more important for the public to know the role of lobbyists in how decisions are made with their lives. It's even more important than it has ever been in the history of Ontario that there be accountability and knowledge on how these lobbyists work, because never in the history of this province have so few people made so many decisions. That's what the Harris government is about: so few people making so many important decisions. That's why we have to know who the lobbyists are, how much they get paid, who they've met with and what influence they had on major government decisions. Up until this moment, we do not know. As you know, this government has made massive changes in the lives of the people of Ontario without any understanding of the role of lobbyists. This pale attempt, Bill 69, as I said, puts a smile on the face of lobbyists. There's not one lobbyist who is concerned about it, because they know it's a whitewash.

Mr Miclash: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: On this very important legislation I do not believe we have a quorum in the House.

The Acting Speaker: Clerk, will you check for a quorum, please.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: You can see why it's a problem. All I have left is 10 minutes. It gets worse every time we stand up to debate a particular bill, because as we do the time is reduced, and there is so much to be said in this place. In 10 minutes you can barely say enough to say hello to the audience that's watching this program.

We're talking about Bill 69. I'm happy to have this opportunity, because there is so much to say. I want to say that I support this bill, because if you don't say that you support it, they'll say, "They are so negative and they have so much to attack that they probably don't support this bill." So lest we are considered to be opposing this bill, I want to say I support this bill, as weak as it is.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Marchese: The member for Nepean, my good buddy — I welcome him in this place. You've got to calm them down; I only have eight minutes, Speaker.

This is a weak bill, and I support it, as weak as it is, lest we be accused of not supporting the bill at all.

Moving on, this is a pro-business kind of government. What could this government ever do that might debilitate, weaken their business friends in some way or take money away from those friends of theirs? Can you conceive of a Tory government which is in the — dare I say? — pockets of big business introducing a bill that would somehow limit their friends' ability to influence these guys? That's why I say to you that this is a weak bill.

The intent of the bill is to make it appear as if they're doing something lest they be accused of not doing anything at all. This is the type of bill that is perfect for the Tories because, among so many other things, it creates a false sense of security, creates a feeling that now that we have introduced this particular bill on the matter of forcing people to register their names as lobbyists, it gives everyone the appearance that the thing is done, that there's a bill and people can go home and relax, that we've got nothing to worry about any longer.

That is the false sense of security connected to the bill, and there's a good point here: It isn't this bill that's going to hold these Tories accountable; it's public involvement, it's public awareness, it's civic movement. It is a movement we need in order to keep these Tories in check and accountable. But dare I say that what I think we need is a civic movement that will keep any government accountable, and that's what we're lacking these days. We are lacking the kind of awareness that is desperately needed to hold politicians accountable. We don't have it. I tell the

people watching not to be lulled into the false security that somehow this legislation is going to take care of their worries. There's a lot of money out there chasing these Tories, big bucks. I don't have it, most human beings I know don't have it, but there are a lot of Tories out there who have a lot of bucks.

Mr Wettlaufer: The unions are giving more money to you and the Liberals than ever before.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please, member for Kitchener.

Mr Marchese: Listen to this guy from Kitchener. How many times do I have to tell him? The contributions from unions to the New Democratic Party total 15%. The rest of the money comes from individuals, ordinary guys. Where do you think these Tories get their money from? It's the ones who have the big cheques, the big pockets, the ones who grease the wheels.

The pro-business party: That's where the money is coming from. Do you think they would introduce a bill that would somehow limit those dollars to flow in to these guys? Of course not. It would contradict the essence of who these people are. I say to you, the only way that we politicians can be held accountable is through a civic movement which, in so doing, will make sure the governments will listen.

Now you have had the experience to know that these guys don't listen to anybody. You know that, member for Nepean, through the Citizens for Local Democracy organization, which attempted to dissuade you from the course you were in, attempted to tell you: "Listen to what we're saying. We don't want the amalgamation with the city of Toronto with the other cities." It was a wonderful civic movement, I've got to tell you. A lot of them say, "We failed to convince this government," but they didn't fail in their overall efforts to mobilize the general public, which they have succeeded in doing in the city of Toronto and beyond those borders. That movement did not fail. It failed to move the immovables, the impervious members of the House, that is, the Tories.

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But it isn't a movement that has to happen in one city. It has to be a movement that is pervasive and that transcends little borders in a general way to be able to influence parties such as these. For me that's important. Being held accountable is important. Being held accountable by the riding association in my riding and the constituents is important. But to witness these Tories, you wouldn't know who the hell they're concerned about. But I know, and I say in relation to this Bill 69 that the septic tank is full and all they're doing with Bill 69 is identifying the ingredients in that septic tank. That's all it does.

If you look over the last three and a half years of their reign, many of their friends have profited very, very well. M^{rs} Leslie Noble has profited very well through the friends she has here, as have a lot of other friends they've got: M. Tom Long, another good buddy of theirs. Imagine, God, a contract for US\$250,000 to find a new CEO for Ontario Hydro — those are good bucks. We're talking US\$250,000 just to find a CEO for Ontario Hydro. How

do ordinary people make that kind of money? That's what I'd like to do. I'd even offer my services for a couple of hundred bucks to make a living. But for M. Tom Long, \$250,000, pretty good bucks. He's doing all right.

This legislation is all right. It's a modest attempt to deal with the problems a lot of people have; no question about that, no quarrel with that. The point is that it is weak legislation, and that's what this government wants: weak legislation. They can pretend, through the lawyers who will speak to this, and non-lawyers, that this is great, that it mirrors the federal legislation. Recall now: The federal legislation, as has been pointed out by the member for Algoma, has not convicted one single person. That should alert the public watching and the rest of the members who might pretend to be concerned about this that the legislation in Ottawa and the one we're about to support here in this place will amount to nothing. There will be no convictions.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): If you had a member from Ottawa, you'd know that —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau.

Mr Marchese: No, I like that kind of debate. Let him speak. It's good for this place.

We need some time in committee to deal with some of the problems that have been talked about. Do you know how many millions of dollars are being spent by their crony friends to convince them, and the public, about what it is they need or what they want the public to believe in and what they want the public to understand? They spend millions of dollars to manufacture consent. They hardly need to be on a list. These people are spending millions out there and the whole public knows what they're doing.

If we're going to make this legislation effective, we've got to make sure there is disclosing of lobbying expenditures, including fees and advertising; eliminating tax deductions for lobbying expenses; requiring ministers and senior staff to disclose whom they meet with and eliminating the loophole that if you're invited to a meeting, it's not lobbying. Some of these things have got to be improved. That's the kind of Tory government we've got: If you meet with somebody and I invite you, it's not lobbying. Do you see the kind of problem we're dealing with with this government? This bill is weak and it doesn't do the job it should be doing. We need hearings to improve it.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I listened with great interest to the member for Fort York. He talks about what's going on in Ottawa, the situation in Ottawa. His caucus may have more insights on what's going on in Ottawa come tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock. Their caucus may grow; you never know.

The member says this is a weak bill that would create a false sense of security, but then he gets up and says he's going to support it. He's got to make up his mind. He can't have it both ways. It's weak, he says, creates a false sense of security, but he's on board. Shame to the honourable member for Fort York. How could he support a bill which he decries so much?

Then, in this place, we see a member attack his own constituents. This member represents Bay Street, literally. He represents Bay Street. M. Barrett works in his riding, and for a member to come to this place and decry a major employer, the financial services sector, which employs tens of thousands of people in the member for Fort York's riding — I don't understand. That's the first time we've ever heard about that.

Then he decries the fact that these big businesses, these big banks, are sending money not to him but to other political parties, all of this money going from his riding to other ridings. I don't understand. Why wouldn't they want to send it to their own member?

Then he talks about the influences of this government and accountability. He's selling himself short. He's holding this government accountable; it's not just people outside of this place. Our friends the Liberals don't. He's selling himself short.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): He is selling himself.

Mr Baird: He is selling himself, the member for High Park-Swansea says.

Mr Colle: I appreciated the comments of the member for Fort York. I think the critical thing he said is that this is about accountability and it's a very weak attempt by this government to pretend they're going to make lobbyists accountable. I know the member for Fort York realizes that this is very limited in its scope and that there isn't one lobbyist in the country that's afraid of this bill. I'm sure the government backroom boys discussed this bill with their lobbyist friends and it got the rubber stamp there, and that's why we have such a weak bill.

This government has always been very tough and likes to beat up on nurses, social workers, teachers, small business people, public employees. It's always very tough when it comes to legislation on those groups of Ontario citizens. But when it comes to groups this government favours, like the lobbyists, you can see it treats them with white kid gloves. This is not even a slap on the wrist to their lobbyist friends. But if these were teachers or nurses or small business people, you could imagine the kind of draconian legislation they would be pushing and speaking about.

This, to this government, is a big joke and a big laugh. They're all laughing about it. They think it's essentially another night out on the lobbyists. They love this bill because, in essence, it rewards their friends. It tells their friends who persuade them in decision-making: "We are going to leave you alone. You can carry on as you did before. We're just going to do a little bit of window dressing with Bill 69." I think the member for Fort York understands that. That's why he's willing to at least try to hold big business accountable and ask questions, which is his role.

Mr Wildman: I listened carefully to my friend the member for Fort York. While he indicated that the bill is weak, he did say it was a step in the right direction. It just doesn't go far enough.

He indicated that there will be registration of lobbyists under this legislation, so we'll know who they are, but it won't basically change what they do. It's what they do that is the concern. We'll know who they are now, but we won't know how much they're paid, we won't know how much they spend in expenses.

What we're really concerned about is not the kind of lobbying that we've seen in this place, which is already quite visible. The co-ops, for instance, last week had sort of a wine and cheese for members. Members went down and talked to various representatives of various co-ops. We've had the Niagara wine producers come; they have wine tasting, and members go and talk to the representatives of the industry. The chiropractors sometimes put on a dinner for MPPs, and you go and you talk to the local chiropractor representative from your riding and so on.

It's not that so much that we're concerned about, but rather the moneyed interests who have full-time people or firms hired, consultants, to ensure that they get contracts. It's with this government's decision to privatize so much of what government does that this has become a multi-million dollar boondoggle. These people are ensuring that they get part of the action. That's what we want controlled under this legislation.

1700

The Acting Speaker: To sum up, the member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: I thank my friends and foes for their remarks. I would say to the member for Nepean that he knows how to hurt me. He says I am here representing Bay Street and the banks and all that. I've got to tell you, you're right, and it's unfair that I represent them and they send all their money to you. As a matter of justice, I think something is fundamentally wrong with that. Something is wrong when bankers and other Bay Street types help these guys and not me. What gives? I know what gives: Their pockets are deep. They work hand in hand and we don't. We want greater accountability for what they do and they don't.

Speaker, do you recall the intervenor funding act? Yes, you do. As a critic for the environment, you know that we had intervenor funding that would permit individuals, funded by government, to defend the public interest. And what did these Tories do? They repealed the intervenor funding act. Why? Because they don't want citizens to know and they don't want citizens to defend themselves and they don't want citizens to defend the public interest. Why is it that they would do that if not to give free rein to the corporations?

There's a lot of money to be made in deregulating Ontario Hydro — big, big bucks. Why do you think they're doing it? Because these people are well connected. The grease flows freely between them and the money flows freely between them. If we're going to make this bill a bill we can support in its modest efforts to create some measure of accountability, some measure of at least knowing who is doing this business, if we're going to make it effective, we've got to make the changes we talked about.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): It's my privilege to rise and participate in the second reading of Bill 69, An Act to amend the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 and to enact the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998.

I'd like to begin my remarks by saying that our mandatory registration of lobbyists supports our government's commitment to ensure that the government's activities are conducted openly, fairly and transparently. Not only are we the first government of Ontario to undertake this action to ensure that taxpayers' interests are indeed protected, but we are also the first provincial government in all of Canada to bring forward legislation of this type.

This legislation would require lobbyists to register their identity, the names of their clients, and to declare their lobbying activities on a government registry.

The new act defines three categories of lobbyists: consultant lobbyists; in-house lobbyists for persons, including corporations and partnerships; and in-house lobbyists for organizations. An officer who is compensated for the performance of his or her duties, or an employee, will be considered to be an in-house lobbyist if a significant part of their duties is to lobby public office holders. That's what the bill deals with.

This new act sets out the activities that are considered to be lobbying and who is considered to be a public office holder. When you read the bill, as members on this side of the House have, it says:

"'Public office holder' means,

"(a) any officer or employee of the crown not otherwise referred to in clauses (c) to (e),

"(b) a member of the Legislative Assembly and any person on his or her staff."

That means members on both sides of the House, not just members of the government side, and the debate today seemed to focus around that. That also includes members of the opposition. So if, for example, the Citizens for Local Democracy and John Sewell were lobbying members of the opposition, we would know that. We would know that they were out there lobbying to stop the amalgamation of the city of Toronto, which amalgamation seems to be working quite well. We would know that on both sides of the House.

The new act also sets out what the term "organization" refers to. The debate today seemed to revolve around corporations, but let's look at what the bill says about organizations:

"'Organization' means,

"(a) a business, trade, industry, professional or voluntary organization," but it also includes,

"(b) a trade union or labour organization." So if Sid Ryan is lobbying members of the opposition, we would know that, and this is good.

"(c) A chamber of commerce or board of trade." That's also included under the term "organization."

"(d) An association, a charitable organization, a coalition or an interest group,

"(e) a government, other than the government of Ontario." So if other governments, municipal govern-

ments, are lobbying members of the opposition against the government, we would know that. It also goes on to talk about,

"(f) a corporation without share capital incorporated to pursue, without financial gain to its members." That's included in this bill.

But, like the lobbyist registration in Ottawa, which has been around for over 10 years in order to assist the public in obtaining information about registered lobbyists, the Ontario registry would be accessible on a government Web site.

Ian Urquhart wrote in the *Toronto Star* on October 6 of this year: "The government is to be applauded for making the move. Ontario may be a decade after Ottawa, but it will be well ahead of every other province." We're the first province in all of Canada to bring this legislation forward.

The lobbyist would also disclose information such as the lobbyist's name and address; the client or employer's name and address; a description of the specific legislative proposals, bill regulations, policies, programs, grants, contributions or contracts sought; the names of the provincial ministries, agencies, boards and commissions being lobbied; the source and amount of government funding received by the lobbyist's client or employer. The lobbyist would also have to disclose the communication techniques used. As well, corporations and organizations must file information describing their business and activities.

Yet this is not enough. To ensure greater transparency, consultant lobbyists will also be required to report on the following: when they are communicating with a public office holder in an attempt to influence the awarding of a contract by or on behalf of the crown and when they are arranging a meeting between a public office holder or any other person.

We all know that rules wouldn't be effective without appropriate penalties. For that reason, there are provisions in the bill for fines of up to \$25,000 for violations; \$25,000 for failing to register, making false or misleading statements — maybe that's a rule we ought to have around here some days, but that's a debate for another day — and knowingly placing a public office holder in a position of real or potential conflict of interest. These fines are consistent with those imposed for similar violations under other Ontario statutes.

This bill will also create a lobbyist registrar, with the authority to administer the lobbyist registration and request clarification of information on a registration form or other document submitted. The lobbyist registrar will also be charged with identifying omissions and inconsistencies and communicating with the lobbyist to ensure correction or request supplementary information. He or she will also ensure public accessibility to the information contained in the registry, while at the same time ensuring that an annual report is presented to the minister for tabling in the Legislative Assembly.

Let us remember that all the information registered with the government will be part of the public record. It will be easily accessible and readily available to the pub-

lic. As I mentioned previously, the information will be posted on a lobbyist Web site. I happen to know a thing or two about Web sites, and I know how effective they can be. I just want to mention that in the past year my Web site alone has had over 13,400 visits.

Mr Baird: What's the address?

Mr Newman: The address for the Web site is www.hellonewman.com. When this lobbyist Web site is put in place, my Web site, www.hellonewman.com, will be linked to that Web site, because I think it's going to be a very effective Web site.

The lobbyist registry Web site will enable lobbyists to file, renew or terminate their registrations electronically. That's moving into the 21st century. The public will be able to have on-line access to a database of approved registrations. The public will know which lobbyist is working with which ministry or which member of the opposition, or any member of the opposition. The perceived shroud of secrecy will be forever removed.

Those people who don't have access to the Internet will still be able to do it the old-fashioned way, on a form, and file those reports in that manner. At the same time, those members of the public who do not have access to the Internet and who are not able to access the Internet through their MPPs' offices will still be able to view the yearly annual report tabled in this House.

The government is following through on its commitment to establish procedures to register all persons and firms who lobby the government. We are not only the first government to take action to ensure that taxpayers' interests are protected, but we're also, as I mentioned, the first provincial government across Canada to take this step.

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This legislation enshrines four basic principles: (1) the importance of open access to government; (2) the legitimacy of lobbying; (3) the need for public awareness of influences on government; and (4) that registration procedures should not impede access to public office holders.

Our government has fulfilled yet another one of its promises and has taken action once again to protect the public's interest. The introduction of this legislation is our commitment to conducting government business in a manner that continues to ensure accountability to the taxpayers of this province.

Herbert Agar once wrote, "Politics is the pursuit of the possible, not of the ideal." In an ideal world, we would not need a Lobbyists Registration Act, but we will be better served in having one. Government must be open and honest and government must be seen to be open and honest. This bill ensures that all dealings with the government remain open and honest.

Once again a commitment was made, and once again a commitment was kept. A promise made, a promise kept.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Michash: I would like to make a number of comments in terms of some of the drawbacks we see in this legislation, Bill 69, and bring these forth to the member. He may want to consider them when we take a closer look at the legislation.

As he will know, under the federal legislation there's a code of conduct to cover the lobbyist, and we find that there is no code of conduct in Bill 69 in terms of this legislation — an amendment that should be closely looked at.

As well, we know that with Bill 69 there can be exemptions granted by an order in council. We're left with possibly a simple cabinet decision where the entire Premier's office, a minister's office or other departments can be exempted from the terms and conditions of this legislation — again a large loophole in this legislation, Bill 69, that the member will want to consider in his remarks.

There are no specific duties included in this legislation for the Integrity Commissioner, duties that he would be responsible for. The role of the Integrity Commissioner to investigate and review the complaints under this legislation is totally subject to the direction of the cabinet. We go back to a total direction of cabinet in terms of the lobbyists legislation, Bill 69.

Mr Silipo: I want to say first of all that I'm glad the member for Scarborough Centre had an opportunity to announce and re-announce his Web site. I didn't catch it, so I can't do it, but he may want to do it again in the reply.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): What's on the Web site?

Mr Silipo: I just want to say in response —

Mr Bradley: What is a Web site?

Mr Silipo: The member for St Catharines wants to know what a Web site is. There are some days I feel exactly the same way.

I just want to say to the member for Scarborough Centre that we've indicated on this side, certainly within the NDP caucus, that we see that this bill is at least a step in the right direction. It's something we wish had been tabled by the government about three years ago because it might have been of some little help in addressing some of the issues that we dealt with, such as people like Tom Long. We wouldn't have had to use other routes to go and figure out his link around Ontario Hydro, and Leslie Noble in terms of her lobbying services for Ontario Hydro.

When you look at that, unless the government is prepared to make changes to this legislation, this pale version of a Lobbyists Registration Act will not address some of these issues in terms of doing as a group like Democracy Watch has suggested. They say that if we're serious about legislation that truly holds government accountable in this area of lobbyists, it has to have teeth, it has to have provisions, for example, that include not only expenditures that lobbyists make, the kind of monies they're spending, but the kind of meetings that take place between ministers and senior civil servants also being disclosed. You have to have those kinds of provisions in there as well, and those are the things that we hope will get added to this bill if indeed this bill goes out to committee, as we hope it does.

Mr Grimmatt: It was interesting to hear the remarks of the member for Scarborough Centre and I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment on them. He demonstrated that not only does he have a Web site — and I

believe it's www.newman.com; my kids look it up all the time and ask me why I don't have one — but a thorough understanding of the legislation, something that we've heard from some of the members and that we haven't heard from others. I thought it was quite interesting to hear in his remarks his understanding not only of the legislation but also of the importance of having some legislation rather than having no legislation at all.

As I listened to the opposition's remarks on the legislation, I can't help but wonder why, if they're so concerned about lobbying, they didn't bring in some legislation, either in the five years that the NDP were in power or the five years that the Liberals and their other friends were in power in the mid- to late 1980s.

The legislation was introduced federally in 1988, and I think we all recognize that there's a need for registration of the lobbyists. We can all name off our favourite lobbyists from each group. We all have them. Many lobbyists are quite effective at lobbying a government of any stripe.

As the member for Scarborough Centre indicated, this is legislation that would lead to Ontario being the first province in Canada to have lobbyist registration legislation. We can continue to debate it. Your suggestions are certainly useful and helpful, and I look forward to further discussion. I want to congratulate my colleague on his remarks on the bill.

Mr Bradley: The member points out that there are some positive parts to this legislation and very few what you'd call offensive parts to the legislation, which means, I think, that we have a consensus that at least this minor step forward should be taken. I like to put it this way: It's better than a kick in the shins, I guess. But it could be substantially better, and I know the member will support amendments in committee which will strengthen this legislation.

I don't know if he had a chance in his brief 10 minutes — you only have 10 minutes now under Mike Harris's new rules to speak in the Legislature, so I don't know if you had a chance to mention Tom Long. I saw him in the hallway. His name was being taken in vain. I shouldn't say taken in vain. He was being complimented by the member for Fort York previously because of the fact that he had made US\$250,000 simply for being a headhunter, that is, a person who was to get a new head of Hydro.

I saw him in the hallway. I said I would rush down to the Legislature immediately to defend his honour because I was afraid that perhaps he was being attacked unfairly. But then I found out that the member for Fort York was merely looking on in envy at the fact that Tom Long, former president of the Conservative Party of Ontario, the person who was responsible for running the campaign of the Conservatives during the last election and will have a major role to play in this election — he is in fact in this very building today. I don't know whether he's counting the US\$250,000 he made as a result of the contract as a headhunter or not, but I hope he's treated better than the Minister of Health, who was hung out to dry today by the Premier, who said she was at fault for not flowing the funds to the hospitals.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough Centre has two minutes in response.

Mr Newman: I want to thank the members for Kenora, Dovercourt, Muskoka-Georgian Bay and St Catharines for their comments.

The member for Kenora talked about the exemptions and the duties of the Integrity Commissioner. I appreciate his comments.

To the member for Dovercourt, if you've got your pen out, I can give you the Web site address. I know you said you didn't catch it. It's www.hellonewman.com. I'm sure you visited the Web site.

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To the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay: I'm pleased that his children are some of the many people who visit the Web site, some of the 13,400 who have visited the Web site in the past year. The member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay also asked the question, why didn't the Liberals and NDP, when they were in power, bring something like this forward? And why is this government waiting somehow until the end of its term? The answer is very simple: Those governments were too busy hiking taxes in this province and driving jobs out of Ontario. Combined, over that 10-year period they hiked taxes 65 times. We have been very busy as a government cutting taxes. We've cut taxes a total of 66 times so far in just over three years, and I'm sure that number will even grow higher.

What's important is that this bill here is the first time a provincial government in all of Canada has brought forward lobbyist legislation to protect its taxpayers. That really isn't discussed very much by members of the opposition, but we are the first government to bring forward legislation to protect the taxpayers through this lobbyist legislation.

It's also important to remember that this bill deals with all members of the Legislature, not just members of the government side but members on the opposition side as well.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Scarborough North?

Mr Curling: I really appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill 69, this lobbyists registration bill that's put forward here.

When this government came into power, the first thing they announced was, "We're not going to bow to any special interest groups." I thought it was a rather interesting comment to make, because here we are now with a lobbyist bill to protect the interests of the public.

Let me just make sure we're on the right track. It says, "To protect the public interest to ensure the integrity of the government process; to avoid the culture of preferential treatment on the basis of who you know and how much you're willing to contribute to the governing party." I thought that was quite a statement to make. This government came into being in 1995 and has emphatically stated, "We are not going to kowtow to any special interest groups." What they really meant was that those individuals who had no access in the beginning — to get access

you have to demonstrate, you've got to make some noise, you've got to protest, to get your point of view across. Normally, taking up the phone, for these ministers, was a no-no. Those special interest groups couldn't get through: maybe special interest groups who would like to create a nursing home for those who are more unfortunate; maybe special interest groups who don't have access to jobs; maybe special interest groups who find that government contracts are going through and this could help their constituency.

No, the government announced immediately, "We don't need any of those knocking at our door and demonstrating out here because it's a democracy." They do not call for that, because the people who get to them are those who can take up the phone or play a golf game with them and make all the decisions out on the golf course. Long after we think we're debating things in here, the fact is that the deal is cut already, the deal is all over. We're here thinking we can really change things, but the deal has been cut already for all those friends they have who have greater access to them.

This bothered me somehow, because we think we have democracy. In a democratic country, here we are, a government who was elected by the people for the people, but it was elected by the people for a few who have access to the government. That really bothers me.

I'm sure you will recall, Madam Speaker; you were here the night of Bill 26. It was the height of arrogance of no access. "We will introduce legislation, but we don't want anyone to lobby us," not even the members who are elected to lobby you and say to you: "Listen, let us debate this in a proper way. Let us have committee hearings." No, you shut down the process completely. No access.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): You shut it down.

Mr Curling: Sure, and I will shut it down again if you deny individuals their own democratic rights to have access, to express their view. I would say I have more legitimate right, and many of us here, to lobby you and lobby the government to make sure you change the process, to make sure that the voice of those who don't have access to the government is heard.

Since then, this government has continued to put closure on every bill they could, because their old colleagues and friends outside told them: "Shut it down. We don't want much debate on this. Let's rush it through." So what do they do? They create the minister of privatization. You would believe that if you want to make sure you still have a good lobby, you would do that before. But, oh, no. You appoint a minister of privatization, get all your colleagues in on the show quickly, get all the deals cut and finished, and then say, "Now, let's close the door, because we don't want anybody else to have access to us." But the doors are not really tightly closed.

It is weak, as we have pointed out. Bill 69 is weak. But on this side, we understand that it's a start. If they even give a little window, a little peep of light coming through, maybe it's a start to say that some people have to be accountable. I don't know how accountable some of the

individuals are who have those big pockets, who can really fill the coffers of all those who are fundraising. They brag about how much fundraising they can do and how much money they have to fight the next election. Of course. They are saying, "Here is where I could have access to the government."

Let me just raise one particular case that is so important about access. The other day, Madam Speaker, you must have heard about a group of individuals who actually want access to government. Yes, they want access to projects. This was the African-Canadian Society on Health Care Issues. The government said if they identify issues, they would like people to come forward and have access to them to make sure that those seniors who are in need now would have a place to go. Those who may have access to those individuals are from their own community, the African-Canadian community, who feel, "Yes, we will set up a home." They put their tender in and, lo and behold, when they put their stuff in, what happened? The minister stated that they were one minute late.

I've got a letter from the minister here. It's important to read a very important part of his letter. He said:

"In terms of the specific details of the African-Canadian Society on Health Care Issues' application, the tender office followed its standard procedures. At 12 o'clock" — the closing time for the RFP staff, from the tender office time stamp — "a receipt noted that the tender was closed. As well, the minister's staff took the extra precaution of checking the lobby and the adjacent parking lot at the deadline and found that no one was in the lobby or approaching at closing time."

This is the interesting part:

"Based on the ministry's records, the African-Canadian Society on Health Care Issues arrived at the tender office at 12:01." Remember, he looked in the parking lot, he peered all over the place, and nobody was in sight. But guess what? When the application was stamped, it said 12:01. I think they beamed them in. All of a sudden, they appeared. At 12:01, there they were and said, "Here's my application," and they said, "We deny it." It says:

"Consistent with standard procedures, the tender office staff immediately date and time-stamp the submission as received. The time appearing on this stamp was 12:01."

Talk about access. I presume this special interest group — the Premier himself stated: "I will not listen to any special interest group. All those people are making noise." I presume that's it. So when you even see a light and you feel you can get through that door, this same government is denying access to individuals who must serve the needs.

To me, basically this Bill 69 is a joke. It's a smoke-screen. It's not going to do anything at all. It lets you believe that they're doing something, but it's nothing at all. Then the minister, in his quiet, consoling way, stated that, "Next spring we will offer these projects again, and then you may, of course, apply." "Try again," he said to those special interest groups.

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But if you were the individuals who could fill the coffers of the Conservative Party, maybe you didn't have

to go through this exercise. If you could come to the \$500 or \$1,000 fundraising, it's quite possible that you would be able to meet with the minister and talk one to one, or play golf with the minister. Then you would not have this beaming in, the fact that, "Whoops, you are late."

I'm telling you, don't believe one iota of this, that this lobbyists bill will help any of those individuals who need proper access following proper procedures to get any of their projects. They have to form the back of the line and wait all over again to make sure the guy and the gal with the money who are coming through, with the big pockets, will have access to this government. Bill 69 will do nothing for them, for our very multicultural society. They've got to form the back of the line again.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Silipo: I listened with interest to the member for Scarborough North. He focused his comments on the issue of access. He went a little bit more broadly than just the bill, but I think he made some very important points around what this bill will not do. It will not in effect provide the safeguards that even the government members claim they want to see, which is to have a system in place that would ensure everything is done above-board — not only that there is a registration of who is lobbying and on whose behalf they are lobbying, but that there is actually some control over or some understanding of the influence that those individuals who act as lobbyists would have.

I think he drew an interesting comparison between what this bill may or may not do and the situation he described of the African-Canadian group that was seen to be or happened to be a minute or so late in applying for a particular project.

What I'm going to be looking for as this bill goes forward — and I hope he would agree with me — is to see whether the government is actually serious about taking an initiative where, to be kind to them, they have brought this forward at this point in time so they can say they have done something on this issue, but where if they're serious about having a piece of legislation that's got some teeth in it, they need to be looking to toughen it up.

I hope they will look to some amendments as we go through the process, things that would ensure some of the things that Democracy Watch and other groups have suggested: disclosing the kind of money people spend on lobbying; providing, for example, that where meetings take place between ministers and other senior civil servants and particular groups, that is also in particular areas seen to be lobbying; that those kinds of things are also part of this process.

Mr Klees: I listened with some interest to the member for Scarborough North. As he expressed his concerns about this legislation, it became very clear to me that the member truly has missed the point of this legislation. He went on at length to speak about individuals who can't afford to lobby government, saying that these people will not have access to the government. For those people, every member in this House is available to hear their concerns. Surely the member will not close the door to any member of his constituency, or anyone in this province as a matter

of fact, who has a concern and wants to bring it forward. All of us are elected to do precisely that. This bill has nothing to do with that.

This bill is about ensuring that those who do have money and who have the ability to hire lobbyists to do their work for them are regulated, that this is done on the basis of a level playing field, that it's done above-board, that the taxpayers of this province can be assured that when lobbying takes place — and it's a matter of fact; it does take place. But this is the first government that has brought forward legislation to ensure that it's done properly, that it's done legally, that it's not done with undue influence. I suggest that the member, although I'm sure well intentioned, should come back into focus with this legislation and understand what its intention is.

He made reference to the fact that this government has not given public consideration to proposed bills. The average time spent on second reading of government bills in the previous NDP government, in the first session, was one hour and 28 minutes, in the Liberal first session of government it was one hour and eight minutes, compared to four hours and 50 minutes for this government. In its second session, the Liberals spent one hour and 38 minutes, the NDP three hours and 55 minutes and we spent five hours and —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Bradley: I'm deeply disappointed the member for York-Mackenzie did not have more time to talk about that because he was on a roll and I really feel bad when that happens.

Mr Shea: Well, seek unanimous consent.

Mr Bradley: I would almost seek unanimous consent but I won't go that far.

I want to compliment my friend the member for Scarborough North for an outstanding speech on this important subject this afternoon. He was right on the mark. What he pointed out was, "Listen, this is a reasonable first step in this particular field." But he also knows that we require some amendments to strengthen this legislation. I agree with him. I hope we can go to committee of the whole and have some of those amendments presented. I hope the government will look upon them as friendly amendments. In fact, I wouldn't mind if the government took the amendments that the opposition parties put forward and said they're their own amendments. I'd be happy to support them on that basis. I'd be applauding them. Naturally, I'd say where they came from originally but I would still applaud them for doing so.

The minister can't always carry the bill. The parliamentary assistant is carrying the bill. The minister, I suspect, is in Management Board at this very time trying to move those funds for the hospitals in Toronto. I didn't know if the member had a chance to mention how sorry he was that the Minister of Health was held out to dry by the Premier on the weekend, who said these emergency room crises that are happening in Toronto are just awful. They announced the money in April and now here it is, we're almost in November, and the money still isn't flowing.

Who does the Premier blame? He blames the Minister of Health. I'm glad that didn't happen with this bill.

Mr Marchese: It's a pleasure to support the comments the member for Scarborough North has made. I would say that these are issues of access, and that's what he spoke to. Unless they do what we have recommended, that is, make amendments to strengthen this bill, then we will know that they're not serious about real change. But if all we're talking about is making sure lobbyists register their names, then I say it's a meaningless act with no teeth and no power, that no change will happen and it will guarantee that the old boys' club continues to be alive and doing very well. The old boys' club connects to the very special interests they dare not name, because they love to attack the special interest groups when they refer to women, when they refer to people with disabilities, when they refer to teachers and unions and the like.

But the biggest special interest groups we have in this country are the ones who have a whole lot of money. We're talking about bankers, we're talking about the general financial institutions and the like. We're talking about insurance companies, big developers. These are their friends and this is the very special interest group that has a great deal of power because they've got the pecunia to make these boys listen.

Unless, I say, we make the necessary changes so as to make this bill genuinely effective, as they claim, then all the issues of access we have been talking about will remain, meaning people with disabilities have no access to these people. Tenants they will not listen to; women's groups, social agencies, food banks and teachers, they're not listening to them.

1740

Mr Curling: Let me just commend my colleagues from Dovercourt, York-Mackenzie and of course St Catharines and Fort York for their comments.

I emphasize again that when this government speaks about lobbying, I speak about access. Lobbying is about access. There's nothing wrong with access. It's who are the individuals who are accessing the government? What rules are being laid down for people to have access? That's fine; that's what it's all about. Democracy is all about access. But I would continue to say that this legislation, although it's a start, hasn't come very near at all to making sure that all those who would like to follow the rules as they're laid down, fair to all, still will not have the kind of access in a very controlled environment.

As my House leader expressed, I would say to the government that we are prepared to put forward amendments to improve this legislation. We hope it will be given proper discussion, proper debate in the committee of the whole where we can all partake in a full and involved manner to make sure that each person who has access follows the same rules, that when the taxpayers' money is collected, when it's being distributed, it will serve us all.

I remember my colleague saying, "The first in Canada and the first here and the first —" That doesn't make a difference. Is it fair even though it's first? Is it able to give those individuals access to the government in a procedure

that is fair to all, not because of how big the wallet is that we can have access, but that anyone who has the interests of our citizens at heart, who would serve the interests of our nation or of our province, is able to get that access to the government that they elect?

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I wonder if I could have unanimous consent from the House to complete the statistics that show the average time spent on third reading for the last three governments. I ask for unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard a no. Further debate, member for Algoma.

Mr Wildman: I'm pleased to participate and close off debate for our caucus on this piece of legislation, Bill 69.

At this time of year, in October, a time of thanksgiving, many of us have had the opportunity to participate with our families in an annual banquet, a turkey banquet in many cases. This bill reminds me of those who prior to sitting down to Thanksgiving dinner promise themselves they won't eat too much but they don't really do anything about it. Then, after they've all been gluttons and they're sitting around or lying around on the couch and the chairs in the living room after having overindulged, they bring in legislation or a bill or a resolution and they say: "We should never do this again; it isn't good for us, so we want to control how much we will eat next time," but they have already consumed more than they should have and they are getting fat on the fact that they've already had too much.

That's what this is about. We have a piece of legislation before the House which presumes to do something about lobbying, something that all of us in this House, on all sides of the aisle, agree with. But what it does, like the federal legislation, is simply require lobbyists to register, to say that's what they do. So we will now know who the lobbyists are, whether they are lobbyists for large corporations, whether they're lobbyists for non-profit organizations, for unions, for municipal organizations, whoever.

We will know who they are. There's no problem with that. We all support that. The problem is that since this was first proposed by the Conservatives in 1996, there have been many, many Tory gluttons at the table who have overeaten at the public's expense.

Mr O'Toole: Name names.

Mr Wildman: I will.

What has happened right now, of course, is that the government is proposing an Americanization, a privatization of public services on a grand scale, although they've had some trouble getting it through the legislative process. This in itself requires this kind of legislation. As long as we have restructuring and contracting out, there will be lobbyists who are trying to get those contracts. It is necessary for the public to know who these people are.

My question, though, really comes to this: Will Bill 69 do anything about the hundreds of millions of dollars that private corporations and financial experts are expecting to make off the restructuring of Ontario Hydro? Will it do anything to ensure that the contracts for the maintenance

of our highways will not in any way be improperly influenced?

There is no requirement in this bill to disclose how well paid these lobbyists are. I was asked a moment ago to name some people, so I'll do that. Would this bill have stopped Conservative insider Leslie Noble from selling her lobbying services to Ontario Hydro for \$84,000?

Interjection.

Mr Wildman: You asked me to name some people. I'm doing it, at your request.

Would it have stopped consultants involved in the Niagara casino bid from advising both the government and the successful bidder? Would this bill have stopped Conservative insider Tom Long from getting a contract for US\$250,000 to find a new CEO for Ontario Hydro when everybody already knew that Mr Farlinger was going to be appointed?

Mr Guzzo: No, no, no. He's the chairman.

Mr Wildman: No, sorry, he hired the American, the American guy who now won't give out the information about how much he's paid.

Would this legislation have stopped the contracts for highway repairs going to a company that hired the ministry official who set up the privatization of the contract? Would it do anything to rein in the many former aides and advisers of Mike Harris, starting with Bill King or Mitch Patten and many others, who are now either seeking government contracts or working as consultants for companies that seek government contracts?

Speaker, you know I would not normally have done this, but it was at the request of the member for Durham East that I had to name names. He asked me to do so, and I've just done it.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Wildman: I want to make something clear: We support this legislation. We think it should go to committee so that there can be some discussion of amendments, amendments put and debate of that so that we can have this bill strengthened. I hope the government will accept some of those amendments at least.

As Democracy Watch has challenged us and said, we must not just register lobbyists, we must close a number of loopholes and we must make this really transparent. We must know how much the lobbyists are paid. What are their fees? How much do they spend on advertising? What do they spend on their expenses? We must eliminate the tax deduction for lobbying expenses. We must require ministers and senior staff to disclose whom they meet with.

Finally, we must eliminate the loophole that if you're invited to a meeting, it's not lobbying. To use an example,

if I invite a representative of, let's say, OSSTF to meet with me, according to this legislation, that individual is not lobbying me. That's a little bit strange. In other words, if a minister invites a representative or a consultant or a group of people working for a company that's interested in a contract for which that minister is responsible to meet with him, then according to this legislation they aren't lobbying. They're only lobbying, I guess, if they invite the minister. That's a pretty large loophole. I think you could drive a bulldozer through it, as it were, if the Minister of Transportation were to invite the representatives of the companies that might be bidding on highway contracts to meet with him, and therefore it doesn't come under this legislation and it doesn't count in lobbying.

We are in favour of this legislation. We think it should be strengthened. Keep in mind, this legislation is patterned after federal legislation that was brought in by the Mulroney government. I congratulate him for it. But I want to point out one thing: There hasn't been one conviction under this legislation at the federal level, so that means either the Mulroney government was squeaky clean or perhaps the legislation isn't quite as effective as it should be. It seems to me that where there have been conflicts of interest related to lobbying in Ottawa that have been suspected or discovered since Mr Mulroney left the scene and prior to that, they have been discovered in most cases by investigations of the RCMP. These are not allegations; these are matters of the public record — thanks partly, I guess, to the current Solicitor General of Canada they're matters of public record.

The fact is this: This legislation is a step in the right direction, but we believe it should be strengthened. We look forward to debating it in committee so we can put forward amendments. We hope the government will consider those amendments seriously and we can strengthen the bill so we have true transparency in how we deal with the public in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate? We'll take the vote.

Mr Grimmett has moved second reading of Bill 69.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Mr Grimmett: I ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: So ordered.

It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1753.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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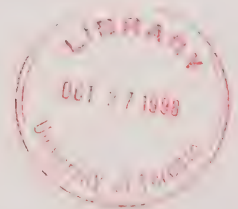
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Deuxième session, 36^e législature

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Lundi 19 octobre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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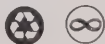
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 19 October 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 19 octobre 1998

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LEGAL AID SERVICES ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998

SUR LES SERVICES D'AIDE JURIDIQUE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 68, An Act to incorporate Legal Aid Ontario and to create the framework for the provision of legal aid services in Ontario, to amend the Legal Aid Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 68, Loi constituant en personne morale Aide juridique Ontario, établissant le cadre de la prestation des services d'aide juridique en Ontario, modifiant la Loi sur l'aide juridique et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm glad to have the opportunity to begin debate again this evening as we resume second reading debate of this fairly important bill, Bill 68. I just note for the record that our critic, Mr Kormos, the member for Welland-Thorold, the next time this bill comes up will have the opportunity to do the leadoff for our caucus as the critic.

In reviewing the Hansard from the previous discussion on this, I note with particular interest the presentation made by a former Attorney General, the member for London Centre, Ms Boyd, and certainly would concur with many of the comments she placed on the record. Like her, I believe this is fairly significant legislation, and I'm glad the government has brought it forward. I want to say to the government that we look forward very much, sincerely, to the discussion on this and to the work in committee on this. We come at this believing this is very much a good step being taken here in terms of the legislation reflected in Bill 68, in effect setting up a new framework for governing the legal aid system in this province, something which we know has been a few years in the making.

The legislation before us reflects, by and large, the report of Professor John McCamus of September 1997, in which he set out, after a good, lengthy study of over a year, a number of recommendations to revamp the legal aid system. People may know that some time ago the Law Society of Upper Canada, which has been responsible and which is still in effect responsible for running the legal aid plan, indicated its willingness to move away from that

direct governance. This legislation would set the framework for a new system of governing the legal aid system.

As we see it, the essential difference that comes about as a result of this legislation is that it would take the current framework, which obviously has government funding as well as contributions made by lawyers through a levy that the law society imposes upon members, and would move the governance of that into an outside agency, a new agency to be created. That agency — and this is again a significant point — would be set up, according to the legislation in front of us, by a majority of people who are not lawyers.

That is something, again following the recommendations made by Professor McCamus, that we find supportable, the idea that you have a system like the legal aid plan set up under a governance structure that has, yes, lawyers involved, as people appointed in a combination of recommendations for the law society and others that the government through the Attorney General would appoint; but with the basic point being that the governance moves from one that is based largely in the legal profession to one that is based, by majority at least, in the public at large, because the government would retain the ability to influence that board of directors in terms of the membership, the people it would appoint.

The concept is certainly something we find supportable. I look forward, as I say, to the bill going to committee because there are some important issues that will have to be addressed. I come at this issue, first of all, from the perspective of believing very strongly as a member of this Legislature that having in our society a strong system of legal aid is vital for putting into practice the notion that justice has to be available to everyone. The essence of a legal aid plan is, in my view, exactly that: that people who are not able to afford a lawyer should not be precluded from having their rights protected and their rights defended by a lawyer of their choosing, that through the legal aid plan there is a mechanism for them to retain a lawyer and to know that their inability to pay legal fees does not prevent them from having good representation on whatever issue they are dealing with, whether that be in criminal proceedings or in any number of civil proceedings covered under the legal aid plan.

As a basic piece of our justice system, having an effective, real and working legal aid plan is crucial in ensuring that the notion of justice being available to all and everyone having equal access to justice and to representation is translated into something that is workable, practical and real. As a concept and as a principle, I believe very

strongly that that is a fundamental basis of our legal system and, quite frankly, a fundamental basis of our society as a whole. I don't think you can have in place any kind of system that you can call just, that you can call representative in terms of the court system and the justice system as a whole if you are limited in when you can get representation, particularly in criminal proceedings, by not having the money to afford a lawyer. I think the basic concept is there.

Certainly the issue of how to fund legal aid has been facing governments now for some time. I was a member of a government that, while still wanting to maintain this very important and basic notion of providing representation to all who need it and deserve it, also recognized that there had to be an ability to try to look at the mushrooming costs of the legal aid plan. That was something that had to be addressed, so the New Democratic Party took some steps when we were in government to begin to try to contain some of those expenditures.

We got into a three-year funding agreement with the law society at that point, and then were supportive as a caucus when we saw that the government was beginning a fairly serious examination of the legal aid plan, something that, had we been returned to office, we would very likely also have had to undertake in the way it has been done, done, as I mentioned, through the person of Professor McCamus, resulting in the kind of recommendations that have come forward.

In the meantime, it was useful to have had the funding envelope maintained as per the agreement we reached with the law society when we were in government. Now that we're looking forward to what the next steps should be, we in our party obviously believe very strongly that the role of the government in terms of funding needs to continue to be there, as of course it needs to continue to be there as the overseer of the system and ensuring that continues.

On that score, while historically the government funding of the legal aid plan has been shared between the provincial and the federal governments, I note with some interest — and I want to again draw attention back to the comments of my colleague from London Centre. She pointed out that the federal government has had for some years a role in this as well, but the share of the federal funding has dropped in the last few years to the point where it is now only about 5% of the overall amount spent on legal aid in this province. That I find particularly troubling, given that we have the federal Liberal government in Ottawa which again in this area, as in many other areas, unfortunately, is reducing its responsibility and leaving to the provincial government the responsibility more and more for finding the money to pay for these —

Interjection.

Mr Silipo: Yes. The minister for women's issues says they're dealing with their deficit by — I don't want to put words in her mouth.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): Changing their definitions.

Mr Silipo: Changing their definitions for legal aid. That's the way they're doing it in this case, but we've seen many an example of the federal government, whether it was the previous Conservative government or, unfortunately, I have to say, the current Liberal government, simply shifting its problems on to the provincial level. Certainly we in Ontario feel this in a very big way in many other areas, and legal aid is no exception.

1840

I don't want to belabour that point, but it also should not go unnoticed that this is part of the reality. Governments — this government today and hopefully another government tomorrow — will have to deal with the continuing pressure of funding. This new board of directors that will be appointed will obviously have the day-to-day responsibility for managing, but the government of the day is going to continue to have the responsibility for the overall funding envelope. That is going to continue to be a challenge, because the real issue is: How do you continue to balance the need on the one hand for not limiting the kinds of situations in which people should have remedy and should have access to legal aid, with the need on the other hand to have a global amount of money spent that has some predictability to it? I say that with an understanding of the kinds of situations we had to deal with and address when we were a government. So I appreciate the difficulties this will entail.

When we talk about the legal aid plan, there is of course not only the aspect called the certificate process, which allows individuals, once they have been granted a certificate, the right to get a lawyer paid for through the legal aid plan; there is also another very important part of that system that I'd like to just touch on, and that is the whole legal clinic process. It's one that I'm happy to see reflected again in this legislation that restructures the plan. I have some questions about the three-year provisions in this legislation in terms of the funding commitment, and I'm sure that issue will be addressed in committee. I certainly know from the legal clinic communities that this is an issue they will want to address and to raise. I know it is something that the legal clinic that serves my own part of town, West Toronto Community Legal Services, will have something to say about.

I just want to underline again tonight my strong support and belief in the need to have that aspect of the legal aid plan not just continue but continue to grow as a vital part of how we deliver good legal services for people who can't afford to pay for a lawyer on their own. I don't mind giving you my complete bias on this in saying that I come at this not just as a parliamentarian, not just as someone who, as I said earlier, believes very much in the principles of justice having to be delivered by way of ensuring that all citizens of our province have access to legal aid, but also as someone who trained in the legal profession and in fact spent what I thought were probably the most useful four months of my three years in law school at Parkdale Community Legal Services, a legal clinic which has been at the forefront of the legal aid service system in the province and which continues to this day to serve the

citizens of Parkdale and the whole west end of Toronto. I can tell you that the four months I spent in that clinic opened my eyes to the needs of the legal aid system and the legal aid plan and quite frankly the legal needs of many of our poorest citizens in the city.

I believed, and since that time believe even more strongly, in the need not just to use the legal clinic setting, as it happens in that case, as a way to give aspiring young lawyers an opportunity to actually do some real legal work in a real setting as opposed to the classroom, but more importantly and more fundamentally believe very much in the service that clinic provides, and many clinics like it across this metropolis and across the province, to the extent they exist.

I appreciate the difficulties the legal clinics have gone through in dealing with the growing pressure that has been put upon them as governments have been making decisions that have resulted in the rights of the poorest among our citizens having to be defended even more strongly. Certainly, if you look at the issue of the changes this government particularly has made in the area of social services, in the area particularly of social assistance — the role that legal clinics have played in bringing forward those cases, not just on an individual basis but in looking at similar case situations and in bringing forward cases that would exemplify the particular problem that was being put forward, and the very crucial role that those legal clinics have played in defending the rights of people who quite frankly without them would not have any legal defence, would not have had any legal recourse.

I believe very strongly that this area of the system needs to continue to be defended, needs to continue to be supported, needs to be further — and one of the things I'll be looking forward to in the discussion in committee is the extent to which there is the flexibility in this law for further clinics to be set up and for that to become even more, in my view, a greater part of the delivery of services under the whole legal aid plan.

Those are just some of my comments at this point in terms of this issue. When this goes forward to committee — I understand there has been some indication from the government that they are willing to let this bill go forward to committee; we will probably be dealing with this, I assume, during the recess in November. I'd just flag that for people out there who may be interested in coming forward and speaking. That doesn't leave a lot of time for them to prepare their thoughts or comments on this bill, because that will likely happen sometime in mid-November. But I would certainly encourage that discussion to happen, and I think that discussion in committee will tell us whether this law is ready to proceed as set out here, with hopefully some amendments that might address those very important points which have to do with some of the issues I've raised, and I'm sure many others that I won't have the time to raise this evening.

One of the issues that some people in the legal aid community have raised is the question of solicitor-client privilege. If there's one thing at the heart of a relationship between a lawyer and a client, the person the lawyer is

working for, it is the sense of the need to maintain confidentiality, to maintain privilege. I know some concern has been expressed about a provision in section 91 of the act, which allows for the conduct of quality assurance audits of lawyers and service providers who provide legal aid services. The legislation, as I understand, provides for limited authority to enter the office of a lawyer or service provider in order to review records by the new governing body. Even though the legislation includes a requirement on the part of the corporation to keep confidential any information obtained in a quality assurance audit, there is still concern that this ability by the new board to enter and gain access to the records of the lawyer in a particular case might infringe on solicitor-client privilege. That's an issue that warrants some further examination, and I hope this is looked at quite seriously when this bill goes forward.

Again, there are a number of concerns that we have and that others have expressed. We have some concerns, for example, around the transition board. When you're making the kind of shift we are making in this legislation from one form of governance to a new and very different type of governance, we understand the need for some transition body to be responsible. There is some concern we would have, and that I know others share, about the extent to which that is so largely controlled by the appointments the Attorney General can make, and I think that area needs to be examined as well.

By and large, we believe the shift to this new structure for governing the legal aid system in this province is a good one. We agree with it; we support it. We look forward, however, to the discussion in committee, because many concerns have been brought to our attention to this point, only a few of which I have raised in my comments tonight, and others which I know we will be able to deal with in the course of comments we make here in terms of flagging what those are. But more importantly we will hear in greater detail from the people who actually work on a day-to-day basis in the field delivering the kinds of services that we, through this new piece of legislation, want to support and want to enshrine.

I look forward to that discussion in committee, to the process going through, and I hope, quite frankly and quite sincerely, that the interest and the genuine approach that we are trying to take on this legislation on this side of the House, certainly within our caucus, is reflected by the government side in terms of their willingness to listen seriously to the kinds of comments that will come forward and to make amendments to the bill, where necessary, to make it a better piece of legislation.

1850

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments?

Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East): I thank the member for Dovercourt for his comments tonight. This is a piece of legislation of which we're proud.

I'd like to outline some of the highlights of the legislation for those who may be wondering about that. The act establishes the mandate, governance, structure, account-

ability and services of a new organization called Legal Aid Ontario. Legal aid would be independent of government — I think that's important — and would be responsible for finding ways to better deliver legal aid services.

This legislation, as well, would ensure that Legal Aid Ontario operates on three principles: first, a principle that would include better service. It would include more accountability for use of public funds, and I don't think anybody would argue with that. More accountability for use of public funds is something I think anybody in this province would like to see. And of course it's important that it has independence, and this bill provides for that as well.

The act would reform legal aid services to better meet the needs of the people of Ontario. To outline the main elements of the proposed act, they include the creation of an independent statutory agency to manage legal aid. It would establish a modern, efficient framework for governance and service delivery. As well, it would ensure the new organization is managed in a more open and in a more accountable manner. Of course, accountability is something that people in this House would like to see more of.

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): I think we can all agree in this House that some change is needed with respect to legal aid and the way that legal aid is administered in this province.

The member for Dovercourt has made some very good points about some of the difficulties that have been encountered by individuals trying to gain access to the justice system. It hasn't always been successful, particularly where women or children are concerned. We have copious evidence of that, where obviously women and children, who are by and large disadvantaged in some sections of our society, are disadvantaged even more because they are not able to get the kind of services they need in order to pursue their remedies in court when other remedies fail.

One thing I would say to the member for Dovercourt, as much as I appreciated some of the comments he made, is that we have to remember that it was an NDP government that brought in the memorandum of understanding and the five-year plan that actually saw the reduction of funding to legal aid. We can argue about the constrictions, the fiscal reality, all of that, but it doesn't take away from the fact that this government that we have before us did nothing more than continue on a path that was set by the previous government and the previous Attorney General when they negotiated a memorandum of understanding with the law society which saw a dramatic reduction in the amount of money that was available for legal aid.

So we have to put it in context. We can agree that it's important that we reform the system, but we must remember that the system does not depend on simply creating an agency at arm's length. It depends on adequate funding, and I would urge everyone in the House to give some real thought to that this evening.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): A renewed pleasure indeed to listen to the comments from the member for

Dovercourt. When it comes to law, our deputy leader, soon to be Deputy Premier, knows what he is talking about.

The Law Society of Upper Canada has indeed managed the legal aid plan for more than 30 years. I trust they've done so since 1967. But as time went by, elapsed, they too felt that it was time for a change. You see, there was a perception of a conflict. You have a taxpayer-funded system administered by lawyers to give money to lawyers, and they felt sincerely that the perceived conflict was enough to start looking perhaps at another way to deliver and to manage the system.

So our party is in agreement with the Conservative government, but we have some doubts, by way of criticism, for we know too well that on the one hand legal aid helps the less fortunate, the people who cannot afford the full fare of representation. Alas, the track record of the Conservative government is dismal when it comes to the recognition of the rights of the less fortunate, of the marginalized, of those people who have less. So we will be the guardian and the conscience of this Parliament — we, the New Democrats — to ensure that people who need it the most indeed get the most protection.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): It's my pleasure to rise in the House tonight to speak briefly about Bill 68.

I would like to turn my attention to the consultation that has occurred as this bill has been developed to present to the Legislature and to remind members and those listening tonight that the current legal aid plan was developed 30 years ago. This change is long overdue. It's very clear —

The Acting Speaker: It's questions and comments.

Mrs Elliott: Sorry. Comments, yes. All right.

This change is long overdue because the people of Ontario need access to legal aid. I would like to comment that the proposed reforms tonight build on the first comprehensive review of the Ontario legal aid plan in its 30-year history.

The government launched this review to ensure that legal aid's annual budget of \$230 million delivers the maximum amount of high-quality services for those Ontarians who most need legal aid. Public hearings were held. More than 200 written submissions were received from a broad range of Ontarians, including members of the public, community groups, disadvantaged groups and the legal community. Dr McCamus was called on for his most professional advice on recommendations for reform, and after his presentation, consultations were extensively undertaken with the public, community groups, legal aid users, legal aid clinics and the legal community. Of course, legal aid consumers were also consulted, as were groups that worked with the disadvantaged.

It is time to reinvent legal aid. It's time that a new organization was undertaken to create a legal aid plan better able to deliver high-quality service.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Time has expired.

Mr Silipo: I appreciate very much the comments made by the members for Wentworth East, Downsview, Lake Nipigon and Guelph, and would just say that it's always good to hear my friend from Lake Nipigon express his

optimism. He tends to be not too far off the mark, so I look forward to his predictions turning out to be true.

I just want to say to the member for Wentworth East that again we agree very much that better service, more accountability and greater independence are all worthwhile and useful goals to achieve in this area of public policy. That's why we're expressing our support at this point, in principle, for the legislation and proceeding with it to go forward. We obviously want to make sure those nice and good and sound principles get translated into legislation that's good legislation, but also legislation that works at the end of the day for the interests of the people it's supposed to serve.

To my colleague and friend from Downsview, I just want to say it does not surprise me in the least — in fact, I would have been surprised if she had not mentioned that it was under the NDP government that we took some steps to try to contain the expenditure and, yes, that did cause some problems. I'm prepared to acknowledge that. I would just say that she should also take heed of the same words that she used in commenting on this when we are dealing with other areas of public policy, because if we did this in one area, there are many other policies in which I'm hearing the current Liberal leader say that in effect all he can do is to simply enshrine the cuts that Mike Harris has made in many areas of public policy, in health care and education and many other areas. That is something that would be interesting to see.

But in this particular area we are dealing with tonight, the legal aid plan, I do believe we can make some important improvements in the current system, and I think this legislation gives us the basis for that.

1900

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): It's my pleasure to participate in the second reading debate of the Legal Aid Services Act, Bill 68.

The changes outlined in the proposed act are good news for Ontario residents who need and use the services of the provincial legal aid system. We all know that the status quo isn't working; it hasn't worked effectively for a long time. Demand for legal aid has changed throughout the years, the people who need the services have changed and the system in which it is used has changed.

I believe that the changes proposed in this act will improve how those eligible for legal aid will access the system. It will also improve the operation of the legal aid plan, making it more accountable to those who use it as well as those who pay for it.

I think the purpose section of the act describes it best:

"The purpose of this act is to promote access to justice throughout Ontario for low-income individuals by means of,

"(a) providing consistently high quality legal aid services in a cost-effective and efficient manner to low-income individuals throughout Ontario;

"(b) encouraging and facilitating flexibility and innovation in the provision of legal aid services...;

"(c) identifying, assessing and recognizing the diverse legal needs of low-income individuals and of disadvantaged communities in Ontario; and

"(d) providing legal aid services to low-income individuals through a corporation that will operate independently from the government of Ontario but within a framework of accountability to the government of Ontario for the expenditure of public funds."

I believe that explains very well the purpose for the act and the program it will be providing.

As a government, we have done considerable consultation. We turned to Mr McCamus, who went to the public, to the organizations who help people access the system, to lawyers providing services and to those actually using the legal aid services. Some of the groups that work with low-income people that we talked to are the John Howard Society, the St Leonard's Society of Canada, Elizabeth Fry and the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses. We also consulted consumer groups, including the Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped, the National Council of Welfare, the Canadian Mental Health Association, as well as various lawyer groups.

From these consultations we heard the same message: People want a plan, independent of both government and the legal profession, which provides the services they want, an accountable and well-managed service, and they want a plan that is fiscally stable. Overall, the message certainly was that as users and as a society as whole, we need an improved legal aid system that would offer high-quality service. Armed with this knowledge, this government has now introduced an act that will not only improve the way the system operates but give it the flexibility to establish and develop new services which will better serve those eligible for legal aid.

It is one of the problems we run into from time to time as one interprets what another person is doing. I was reading a CP story on the changes being proposed to the Legal Aid Act, and it starts off by saying, "The Ontario government is seizing control of the legal aid system from the province's lawyers." I suppose it's a matter of how one interprets it, but I suggest that the word "seizing" implies that the Law Society of Upper Canada is not particularly supportive of the change being made. But in the same clipping it says:

"Legal aid has long been administered by the Law Society of Upper Canada, the profession's governing body.

"But after years of financial woes and controversial service cuts, the organization decided in February it wanted out of the business.

"A commission appointed by the province had made a similar recommendation."

I would point out that the process is definitely in line with what the public has been telling the government and what the Law Society of Upper Canada has been saying, that we want a private, independent organization to administer legal aid and also to operate legal aid in a businesslike fashion to make sure that the money goes towards providing legal aid services to the people who need it, not to administration; that it will be operated in a

cost-effective and efficient manner and the money goes to the front-line services, as we have done with many other services the government provides.

To accomplish that, the act proposes to set up a corporation which, as has been mentioned by others, will be governed by an appointed board of directors, as is any other corporation. The maximum number of legal profession members on the board will be three of the 11-member board. The board will operate in a businesslike manner to benefit the people who use the services as opposed to the optics, at the very least, that the plan operates in the best interests of the people providing the services rather than of the people consuming them.

I would also like to point out the objects of the corporation. This will set the framework for how the new corporation will provide legal aid services in Ontario.

"The objects of the corporation are,

"(a) to establish and administer a cost-effective and efficient system for providing high quality legal aid services to low-income individuals in Ontario;

"(b) to establish policies and priorities for the provision of legal aid services based on its financial resources;

"(c) to facilitate coordination among the different methods by which legal aid services are provided;

"(d) to monitor and supervise legal aid services provided by clinics and other entities funded by the corporation;

"(e) to coordinate services with other aspects of the justice system and with community services;

"(f) to advise the Attorney General on all aspects of legal aid services in Ontario, including any features of the justice system that affect or may affect the demand for or quality of legal aid services."

I suggest that will go a long way to providing the type of service that the people requiring legal aid will need.

Again, it's very important to note that the board will not be operated by the legal profession, as it presently is, but will be operated by a community board appointed to provide that function.

Another important aspect of the bill is that it provides for very specific transition aspects of legal aid as it's presently set up. The bill outlines how the Law Society of Upper Canada shall maintain the legal aid services during the transition period so we won't end up with the law society stopping the provision of the service with the other corporation not yet set up to go into operation. The bill speaks to that and points out that the law society must stay in its present mode until the new organization is set up.

Another part of the bill that's very important to note is that it suggests that the new corporation must provide the services as they are presently being provided but can look at other ways of providing similar services to make it more effective and efficient, such as mediation processes and paralegal services and so forth, to provide better, more efficient and effective services for those needing it. It's very important to note that they will be obligated to stay in the services as they presently are, so no one will be left without services.

Although the new corporation would not take effect until mid-1999, the bill says that until the coming into effect of the new corporation, the law society must maintain the present services. I think that will guarantee the services.

It's very important that we recognize that the government did go through a considerable consultation process for this bill. We recognize that the present act has been in place for 30 years and that it's not functioning properly, that only those people who are involved both on the legal side and on the usage side know how the act should be changed to better serve the people who need it and put more emphasis on providing end-result services than on the administration of those services.

1910

I would point out that the government did considerable consultation with a great number of organizations. All the groups and individuals consistently stated that they wanted a legal aid plan that was independent of both government and service providers, accountable, well managed and fiscally stable. It's very important to mention here that this change is not intended and is not the by-product of reducing the cost of operating legal aid. I would point out that the minister has guaranteed \$230 million in stable funding, which is the funding for 1998. He has guaranteed that stable funding for the coming three years, so the new corporation would be set up to reallocate that money into front-line services — not to find ways of reducing the total expenditures, but to put that money to more and better uses than is being done at the present time.

The other part that's worth mentioning is the issue of the makeup of the board. The board will be a private corporation with an 11-member board of directors. Five persons will be selected by the Attorney General from a list provided by the law society, five members will be appointed by the Attorney General and the chair of the board will be appointed by the Attorney General by mutual agreement of the law society and the Attorney General. Again, the majority of the board will be non-lawyers and the board is also obligated to provide and reflect the geographic diversity of Ontario.

Legal Aid Ontario will be responsible for providing high-quality legal services which meet the needs of Ontarians who require legal aid. The new organization would identify legal aid needs and provide more accessible and cost-effective services.

Legal aid could provide legal services in other areas of civil law subject to the Lieutenant Governor in Council's power to identify areas of civil law and types of civil cases or types of civil proceedings for which Legal Aid Ontario would not provide legal aid services. Legal Aid Ontario would be authorized to provide legal aid services by any method it considers appropriate. Again I point out that this will allow it to find new and more innovative ways of solving the problems and positions that people find themselves in, apart from having every case go before the judge and consuming a lot of time and energy on everyone's part. There may be other, more effective and efficient ways of providing that service.

It's also important to note that the new corporation will be accountable. Legal Aid Ontario would be made accountable to the provincial government for the expenditure of public funds. Though they are a completely independent board, they will not be allowed to tax for their own purposes; they will have to receive the money and be accountable for those monies to the provincial government.

Legal Aid Ontario would also enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Attorney General for five years, under which it would agree to provide the Attorney General with detailed information on its operation and plans, including its annual business plan and its policies and priorities in providing legal aid services. This is to protect and make sure that as we proceed, one would not find oneself in a position where the new corporation comes up with methods that work well for the corporation but do not serve the community well. This would provide the ability for the Attorney General to make sure all their new approaches meet the requirements of the public.

The provincial government has also committed to three-year stable funding for the agency, and the provincial government will contribute \$230 million in legal aid. This will provide the proposed agency with the financial stability to accomplish the proposed changes. It's very important that as one of these corporations — not crown, but a regular corporation — sets up its structure, it has the wherewithal to provide the services it's being mandated to provide over at least the immediate future, so it does not find itself set up and then not able to provide those services.

To quickly go over it, I would just like to point out that the act really is based on transferring the operations of the legal aid plan and the design of new ways of providing legal aid to the residents of Ontario over to a private corporation as opposed to the Law Society of Upper Canada, who have said, according to the CP article, they no longer want to be in that business; not that they do not want to provide the legal aid, but they do not want to administer the plan. This corporation will do that. It will create that agency. It will provide more public participation and input into the process. It will ensure that the public agency is accountable. It will provide the statutory mandate, the board composition, organization structure and the funding mechanism for the agency and establish a modern, cost-effective governance and delivery framework and create a flexible framework for the service delivery.

I've gone over most of the structure of the board. Again, going back to the issue that the legal aid plan has been in existence in Ontario without change, or without significant change for 30 years, I think everyone realized that major change was needed. This bill goes a long way towards providing that change and looking after the legal aid needs of the people of Ontario and, again, dealing with some of the concerns that have been expressed by the residents who come into my constituency office in Woodstock to express their concerns about the present plan and how it is not working and how they think there should be

some improvements and changes made so they can access the services they need.

I hope the bill will receive support from all sides of the House. I could do less than to read on from the CP clipping, which spoke about the seizing of control and other issues as they relate to the law society. At the bottom of it is an interesting comment. It says:

"The changes appear to be a positive move for legal aid, said New Democrat Marion Boyd, a former Attorney General.

"The law society has not been known to be particularly businesslike in its management style," she said."

I would assume from this that the members opposite realize that these changes are needed and that this act will go a long way towards correcting the shortcomings the present act has.

With that, I will conclude my comments and say we look forward to support from all sides of the House to get speedy passage of this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : Tout d'abord, c'est avec plaisir que j'apporte mes commentaires et mes inquiétudes envers ce projet de loi.

Je peux dire qu'actuellement, si nous sommes dans une situation comme nous le sommes dans le moment, c'est que le gouvernement, depuis son élection de 1995, a causé beaucoup de maux de tête et de difficultés aux familles à faible revenu, surtout dans le secteur de prestations familiales. Nous connaissons qu'encore dans toutes les circonscriptions, nous avons beaucoup de difficultés, et souvent nous devons avoir recours aux services d'aide juridique. Mais aujourd'hui, on nous dit que ce projet de loi va permettre de transférer la responsabilité ou la gestion au secteur privé.

Laissez-moi vous dire que toujours le procureur général aura le plein contrôle, même si nous disons dans le projet de loi qu'il y aura un comité d'administration composé de 11 personnes. Mais sur 11 personnes, cinq seront choisies par le procureur général et les autres seront recommandées par le barreau. Actuellement, lorsque nous devons procéder, surtout dans les services familiaux, et aussi dans les services sociaux, souvent on doit avoir recours à un service d'avocat, d'aide juridique, mais il est tellement difficile par le temps qu'on puisse se rendre avoir l'approbation. C'est là que je me demande, avec le secteur privé, si on va attendre encore plus longtemps.

Le temps qu'on attend les gens et qu'ils viennent cogner à notre porte, il n'y a aucun moyen. On doit avoir recours à une maison pour les dames battues, à ce qu'on appelle par chez nous la Maison Interlude, mais dans tous les sens on doit toujours courir.

Aujourd'hui, avec ce projet de loi, j'ai encore de grandes doutes : est-ce que ça va être plus facile ? Je crois que ce n'est pas clair dans le projet de loi.

Ce sont les points que je veux soulever ce soir.

1920

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I will say to the member opposite from Oxford, Mr Hardeman, that we on this side of the House, in this caucus, do find some things

in this bill that are supportable and we feel that it moves us in a direction that may be helpful at the end of the day. However, there are, as is the job of this House, some concerns that we must raise and put on the record and will put on the record as the debate continues and as we go out to the public to hear from them around this piece of legislation.

One of the concerns that we have and that I don't believe the member raised is the question of who gets appointed to the controlling board. We have seen, by way of the record of this government over the last three years, the lengths they will go to in order to make sure that even when they do set up a body that is semi-autonomous or autonomous in some way, in fact at the end of the day they are still in control, they are still calling the shots, they are still deciding on decisions that are made that affect the lives of the people out there in the communities that we represent. We certainly want a board to be established, an operation of legal aid to be established that is accountable and responsible.

I will get into it a bit further, in a bit more depth, later tonight as I speak to this, but if you look at the control and the involvement of the Attorney General at every level of the appointments process, one can't help but be concerned that this board again will be politically tainted. In some instances very good boards and agencies out there try to do their work on behalf of the people of this province, simply to be told at the end of the day by this government that they can't.

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough): I'd also like to take the opportunity to comment on the message from the member for Oxford. I think the biggest benefit of this bill, the Legal Aid Services Act, as he has already stated, is that it lays the groundwork for a new organization, Legal Aid Ontario. That's very important. I think we have all seen that there has been some concern about the former organization and the way it was dealt with. I think this act would ensure that the needs of Ontarians would be the primary focus of the board of directors.

The board would be independent of government and the legal profession. I think that's very important. The members, of course, as we all know, would be appointed for fixed terms of two to three years and could only be terminated for just cause. The independence is needed, in my opinion, to ensure that the new organization represents the public and avoids any perception of conflict of interest with the government.

It also, as we've suggested, is independent of the legal profession, which we all know is a supplier, naturally, of most legal aid services. I think that independence is as important there as it is with the government involvement.

Their mandate, of course, their governance, their accountability and the service they would provide would be clearly specified by this act. Priority setting would be at the direction of the board. This also helps to ensure the new agency's independence, and there's certainly no conflict.

Finally, I believe our approach is consistent with legal aid plans in many other provinces, certainly in England,

Wales, Australia and New Zealand. That certainly lends to the credibility of this act, and I want to support it as well.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? If not, the member for Oxford, you have two minutes.

Mr Hardeman: I'd like to thank the members for Prescott and Russell, Sault Ste Marie and Hastings-Peterborough for their, I think it's fair to say, somewhat positive comments from all three members. We very much appreciate that.

I would just very quickly like to address the question raised by the member for Sault Ste Marie as it relates to the appointment of the board. I think the bill is quite specific as to the appointments that will be on the board. It will be an 11-member board, five to be appointed from recommendations by the Law Society of Upper Canada, five to be appointed by the Attorney General, and one, the chair of the board, who would be appointed by mutual recommendations of both the law society and the Attorney General. I think that bodes very well for an independent board to govern this new corporation. As I think the member for Hastings-Peterborough mentioned, in fact they are fixed appointments to the board and could not be removed without cause. I think that would leave their decisions unquestionable and in the best interests of the legal aid corporation in Ontario as opposed to the appointing body. So I think that very much —

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): We're not like the federal Liberals.

Mr Hardeman: I think that's true, member from Ottawa. I think this will guarantee that the people will have an impartial party governing the board and looking after the needs of legal aid.

Again, I thank all three members for their comments and we look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Castrilli: I'll be splitting my time with the member for Kingston and The Islands.

I want to say at the outset to the Attorney General that I believe he and I share a similar goal. Justice, like many other fields, but perhaps even more than some other fields, requires some very careful thought. It requires an Attorney General prepared to bring forward legislation that is innovative and broad and that will meet the needs of citizens, and it requires an opposition that is willing to look at what's put before us.

It's not every piece of legislation that will attract the ire of the opposition, but every piece of legislation is required to be given careful scrutiny. This is one such piece of legislation. We agree that the end goal is to provide the best possible service to Ontarians. I think that is the purpose of the justice system, that all citizens be given equal access to the law and equal protection under the law. I hope that the House tonight will consider my comments within that context.

I think we all believe that that access and protection is afforded under our Constitution regardless of gender, age, race, ethnicity and religion or physical or mental disability. While it is nowhere mentioned, in order for justice to

be truly done, there must be access and protection without reference to the size of one's wallet. Previous attorneys general have recognized this, and I would remind members of the House that it was in fact a previous Conservative government that brought in the first type of legal aid plan.

The Honourable Roy McMurtry, a former Attorney General, on the 10th anniversary of the Ontario legal aid plan, stated succinctly what legal aid is all about:

"The basic purpose of the legal aid plan is of course to serve the public, to serve the public by enabling each of its members to have access to the kind of legal assistance that is essential for the understanding and assertion of our individual rights, obligations and freedoms under the law."

A noble experiment was put in place by previous Tory governments, but the legal aid system that we now have, ladies and gentlemen, is in crisis. We know that the system is underfunded. We know that certificates are not issued. We know that when they are issued, they are issued only for certain kinds of actions. Women and children, in particular, we know are at risk without representation in the courts. We know that this leads to plea bargaining of sometimes very dangerous offences because there aren't the resources in our court system.

The government knows full well that there is a crisis. It has been severely reprimanded by both the Provincial Auditor in his last report and by judges, and itself has recognized this by commissioning not one but two reports on legal aid. So we know it's high time that something was done.

1930

This particular piece of legislation, as I've said at the outset, is not the kind of piece of legislation that will attract inordinate criticism from the opposition. Some of the things it contains are things that the profession and people in general have been asking for. There's no question that this bill establishes Legal Aid Ontario as a corporation responsible for the management of legal aid in a cost-effective and efficient manner, but I want to take issue with some of the speakers who have spoken before me to say it's not good enough to point fingers at the law society and say they mismanaged. That's not the job of people in government such as ourselves. It is our job to look for creative solutions. Finger-pointing does not assist us.

The corporation, as it stands, is something we can applaud. The fact that it's to have a board of directors that is to be chosen in a way that would appear to be objective is also a very laudable goal. One of the members opposite who seems to be heckling all the time might want to hear that I find some things that are good in this bill. Rather than heckling, he might want to just listen.

The board of directors of 11 members is a very worthy goal. I think the notion that it would be largely made up of the public, who are the primary consumers of legal aid, will give the system a great deal of confidence.

Let me say to those who have mentioned it before that there is some concern about the appointment process. The way it is set up now, with a majority of lay members, with

some members being chosen by the Attorney General and others by the Attorney General and the law society, is a good model. The success of the corporation will depend on the quality of the people who are appointed. Even though your process may be fair, in the end we are a little worried about how the appointments will be made. I want to say that we will be paying particular attention to make sure that the diversity that is Ontario is reflected, the experience that is Ontario is reflected in the composition of this board. I would imagine the Attorney General wants no less.

The legal aid services as envisioned in this legislation will continue to be provided in criminal law, family law, clinic law and mental health law. I would remind members of this House, though, that in recent times even certificates in those areas have been either curtailed or eliminated outright. In certain areas of family law we know, for instance, that it hasn't been possible to get certificates. There are areas of the law as well that are not at all covered under this agreement. In particular, my office has been contacted by many people who do refugee law, for instance, by people who do poverty law, by people who are involved in property law, landlord and tenants. These are the kinds of issues that people at the lower end of the income scale have serious difficulties with. It is not always feasible for them to afford a high-paid lawyer.

I note that in the bill the paralegals and mediators will be recognized as legal service providers. I understand the Attorney General will bring forward a package later on with respect to those particular professionals. We'll look forward to discussing those sections at that time.

What concerns me about the bill is that it provides a shell. It's a very good shell; it's a shell that many people have suggested. But in the end it is just that. Until we understand how the shell is to be peopled, how the shell is to be funded, we have no real understanding of how it will work. We can have the best building in the world. If we don't have the money to run it, it will decay and it will fall apart. What this bill does not address is what has been told to the Attorney General and this House over and over again: that it's important to have stable funding with respect to justice — not extraordinary funding but stable funding. That is not anywhere in this legislation. I guess we'll just have to wait and see, if and when that funding formula is available, whether it will be adequate, because history has shown us that funding for justice has been on the decline and that funding for justice has eroded the quality of justice that Ontarians have been accustomed to having in this province. So funding is the key — accountability, yes, there must be accountability for that funding, but funding is the key to the success of this organization.

Legal aid in this province is a relatively new phenomenon, as many of you will know. In fact, there's been some form of legal aid since 1951. You could actually characterize the three stages of legal aid. Prior to 1951 it was largely a charitable thing that lawyers did. If you happened to find the right lawyer on the right day, they would assist you with your case. In 1951 there was some more involvement with the government, but the plan we have

today really dates back to 1968, when it was formalized with an agreement between the government and the Law Society of Upper Canada, which for the first time saw the plan being administered by the law society.

In Ontario, those who qualify for legal aid certificates now have the opportunity to choose the lawyer they wish. That was always a central piece of our legal aid system, and then they would be reimbursed by the plan. That's how it worked. The *judicare* model is one that many practitioners in the profession at large have said is a good model and should remain. We hope that this legislation will see fit to ensure that that kind of model will remain for Ontarians.

The history of the legal aid plan here in Ontario changed dramatically again in 1994. At that time, the Rae NDP government entered into a memorandum of agreement with the Law Society of Upper Canada. It was to be a five-year agreement and that agreement would, for the first time, put a cap on the amount of spending that could be done under legal aid. That has proven to be not as good an exercise as envisioned by the creators of that memorandum of agreement because in fact the expenses of the plan have exceeded the amounts that were allotted over any one particular year. The plan has, therefore, had consistent overruns throughout that time. Just looking at 1996-97, we see that \$167 million was targeted under the memorandum of understanding but the public accounts books show us that the plan spent \$226 million.

Interestingly enough, regardless of that overrun, that increase, the number of certificates that have been issued during that time, under the Mike Harris government, have been cut in half. As a result, what we have is a huge gap between the number of people able to access the legal aid certificates. Under the memorandum of understanding, 154,000 certificates were to be provided for the year 1996-97 and 1998-99, respectively, but only 80,000 certificates were allotted.

That was a new stage of the development of legal aid, but one that hasn't worked well for the people of Ontario. The original memorandum of understanding called for reduction in the funding of legal from a total of almost \$195 million in 1994-95 to \$167 million in 1998-99. Here's the worry: In your Common Sense Revolution that you're so very fond of quoting, you indicated that you would take another \$130 million away. We know that legal aid is already in trouble, and all we've cut so far presumably under the memorandum of agreement is some \$30 million. But if the plan at the back of your head is to cut a further \$130 million, it won't matter what shell you put in place; you will have created havoc on the legal aid system. That is the concern that we have as we look at this legislation and as we look at the record and as we try to give constructive comments in order to have a more efficient, more effective, more fair justice system.

1940

You may remember that soon after you took office in 1995, the Attorney General began the first of his studies on legal aid. He appointed Stanley Beck, professor of law, to review the funding of legal aid and, in particular, to

comment on the law society plan to scale back on the overruns. You may recall that the Law Society of Upper Canada had approved \$40 million in annual cuts to the legal aid plan in order to address the deficit. That required a number of changes, such as ending payments for divorce and wrongful dismissal, capping the amount of annual billings per lawyer, eliminating some travel, mileage and accommodation payments for lawyers, establishing budgets for big criminal trials where costs were expected to exceed \$20,000, and requiring applicants to pay a \$25 fee.

There were proposals to have the law society stop issuing legal aid certificates and to limit the fees lawyers could collect in any one day. Those, as you may recall, were deferred.

The government's position was that the law society had to manage the deficit, and then they appointed Stanley Beck to comment on whether those decisions were doable.

The first of the reports on legal aid was issued at the end of 1995. Professor Beck indicated that the law society plan was doable, but that only dealt with some aspects of the funding. It left open the whole problem of what you do with legal aid, because there had been consistent complaints about how the system improved accessibility for ordinary people.

After much outcry from a whole host of quarters, including the opposition and including myself, the Attorney General appointed the McCamus commission to review all of legal aid and come back with a report. That was a very thorough study that was done by Professor McCamus and his group. They came up with some 92 recommendations on how you could make the system better. Only very few are embodied in this legislation. That's what gives us pause, because all you did was look at the sections of the report that dealt with governance. You didn't deal with the substance of what legal aid does, you didn't deal with how you're going to fund it, and you didn't deal in detail with the appointment process.

It's interesting that the McCamus report takes considerable pain to outline the principles upon which a good legal aid system should be founded. I'd like to read these into the record because I think they're instructive of what we're trying to do here.

The McCamus report states, at chapter 4, that the principles on which the design of a legal system must be based are:

"(1) The design of the legal aid system should be based on the assessment of the specific legal needs of low-income Ontarians;

"(2) The design of the legal aid system, while reflecting these needs, should also address the diversity of special needs presented by such groups as ethnic, racial, cultural, and linguistic minorities, persons with disabilities; aboriginal communities; women; children; youth; and the elderly," thus the disadvantaged.

"(3) The legal aid system should enhance its central and local capacity to gather and assess information regarding client needs.

"(4) The legal aid system should more effectively rely upon the clinic system, plan administrators, and other service providers as a means of systemically gathering information with respect to legal needs."

I think those are very instructive principles that are set out in this report and it will remain to be seen whether the legislation which has been presented today will in fact deliver on those fundamental principles that we need.

What did the McCamus report find out? It documents that the situation with respect to legal aid, just as I said at the beginning, is critical. It's in crisis. It found, for instance, that some 67% of people who appear in family court are unrepresented. Typically that happens to be women and children who can't afford to pay for a lawyer and typically those are people who get the short end of the stick as they try and muddle their actions through the system.

It's not a question that we don't have fair-minded judges or prosecutors who care. That's not the issue. The courts, we know, are overloaded, they're backlogged, and it is impossible to give each person appearing before the court their due without proper representation. One cannot expect the judges to do the work that should be done by the defendants or the plaintiffs themselves and their lawyers. It's for that reason that Professor McCamus concludes:

"The future legal aid system should rest on a new set of reciprocal commitments between the legal aid system and the government of the province. These should be premised on a shared view of the fundamental importance of legal aid in promoting equal access to justice."

Three volumes of recommendations from the McCamus report, three volumes that cite the difficulty that people encounter, whether it's in family law, criminal law, poverty law, landlord and tenant law or refugee law; three volumes of tables, of graphs, of endless accounts very meticulously put down on what's wrong with the justice system as it applies to legal aid and how to fix it.

It's instructive to read Professor McCamus's report. We have 92 recommendations that deal with a whole host of things because the system is in crisis, and yet this piece of legislation deals with one little corner of those recommendations. That's why it's difficult to have faith that the system will in fact be overhauled and made better. Yes, the shell is there. How will that shell be brought to life? That is the issue that remains for us to address.

What has this particular government's record to do with legal aid? We've been told by experts that there's a problem. We've been told by practitioners that there's a problem. We've been told by the law society that there's a problem. We've been told by people who can't get access to justice that there's a problem. So we now have a piece of legislation and we're being asked to trust that what will come after will make it a better system. But when we look at what this government has done with respect to legal aid, with respect to justice, it makes us wonder whether it is a government that can be trusted. We will hold you accountable for ensuring that the system is one that works for ordinary people.

When you look at the cuts in funding that this government has adopted — and you may say to me, "But the memorandum of understanding was an NDP document and we simply inherited it." You're right, it was, but need you perpetuate the mistake? Need you have to force practitioners to take the Attorney General to court to be able to provide simple justice to their clients? Need you go to such lengths that the law society is forced to cut certificates so that individuals can't get the access to justice that they need? I think it's quite instructive when you look at the record.

1950

It's interesting that it's not just us saying there's a problem. As I've indicated, there are a whole host of individuals who looked at the legal aid system and think there's a problem, but I think one of the reasons we have such a huge difficulty within the legal aid system is made very clear in the McCamus report, where the authors of the report mince absolutely no words: This government has made a very bad situation worse. I'd simply like to quote again from the report because I think it's extremely clear on that point.

"The cuts to legal aid in family law occurred at the same time that other services available to assist low-income litigants were also being cut because of budgetary pressures. These cuts, which intensified the impact of the legal aid cuts, include: services for abused women, the office of the children's lawyer, court intake workers, and programs providing service of family court documents."

They don't even get into the whole issue of crown attorneys and their particular difficulties in being able to provide the kind of justice that we need in this society.

You inherited a situation from the New Democratic government and you made it worse by applying a whole series of cuts in a whole series of areas which have affected individuals disproportionately and have made it impossible for the most vulnerable in our society to get the kind of justice they deserve. We have a chequebook society now where if you can pay, you get, and if you can't, you don't.

This has been documented over and over again over the last three years. The Provincial Auditor, the judges of this province, the crown attorneys' association, two commissions on legal aid, on and on there has been criticism about the cuts and what they're doing to the justice system. Of course, we come back to the point that this particular piece of legislation doesn't really address the majority of those issues. It simply sets up an arm's-length corporation. Whether that will be a fairer system remains to be seen.

You have been told over and over again by so many that these cuts are wrong and that we're in crisis. The president of the Criminal Lawyers' Association has been very clear to the point. Alan Gold said not too long ago: "Without reasonable funding for legal aid, the defence bar will not be able to meet the standards of competence necessary to defend their clients and the public will see more Morin inquiries and miscarriages of justice. Families will experience the horror of wrongful conviction and unjust

imprisonment." Those are pretty heavy words when you consider what has happened with respect to Mr Morin and the inquiries that have taken place since then.

We've had occasion in this province over the last three years where we have seen individuals who have been accused of rape, accused of theft, accused of assault who have walked free because the courts have been so overburdened. We've seen it most recently in the case of a 23-year-old woman who was hit by a drunk driver. His case simply took too long to get to court and he was released. How many warning signs do we need to know that we have to do something, that what's really happening at the moment is a situation that requires a great deal of control and monitoring and funding?

I think the government has to take responsibility for what happened. I think this government has watched the system deteriorate to the point where a judge in Ottawa actually ruled that the criminal charges against an armed robbery suspect would be stayed until the Attorney General guaranteed that legal aid fees would be paid in time.

In another case in Sault Ste Marie a judge halted the trial of four men charge with cocaine trafficking until the Attorney General provided assurance that their legal aid lawyers would be paid.

In yet another case, a judge took the extraordinary step of ordering the Attorney General to appear in court to state whether his ministry would pay the legal aid bills of a lawyer involved in a murder trial.

This has nothing to do with Askov, for the members opposite. It has to do with the fact that the system is not funded, that the cuts have been so extreme that we cannot prosecute even very serious offences.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Labour): Liberals are good at spending money. Look at Airbus, the Pearson airport thing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order.

Ms Castrilli: The list of sins goes on. It seems to me I'm striking a nerve across the opposition. I'm glad you're listening, because this is an important debate, I would say to the minister across. The reality is that everyone is telling you that there is a problem.

Hon Mr Flaherty: Flying around seeking helicopters.

Mr Gerretsen: Speaker, do something.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Would the minister from Durham Centre come to order, please?

The Chair recognizes the member for Downsview.

Ms Castrilli: Thank you, Speaker. I've been very careful tonight not to advance opinions that weren't warranted. What I've cited here tonight are the words of judges, the words of experts appointed by the Attorney General himself, the words of the Provincial Auditor. These are not inconsequential names that the members opposite can afford to dismiss. I'm glad they're listening, but you can't afford to dismiss them. This is not the opposition tackling the government gratuitously. These are very serious concerns of very serious people who have looked at this very serious matter and have very, very serious and grave things to say.

Let me say that this particular piece of legislation addresses some of the concerns that have been raised, and I said that at the outset. Of the 92 recommendations of the McCamus report, this addresses the issue that deals with governance and we're grateful for that. But there are so many more that need to be dealt with, and I challenge the Attorney General to bring forth the appropriate legislation, the appropriate regulations, the appropriate mechanism to make those very important concerns of the McCamus report a reality.

As we know, there have been two reports now commissioned by this government that indicate that serious shortcomings in the legal aid system remain. The other issues that remain are no less important. The inability of low-income earners to access legal aid has been intensified by the cuts. We've been told that. The lack of legal representation results in increased court appearances and adds more delays to the court system. Judges are put in a position of having to make decisions based on unreliable and possibly inaccurate information. That too we've been told. In fact a number of judges have spoken out on that topic, no less than our Chief Justice Roy McMurtry, but others as well.

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I could quote you pages and pages of comments by judges in court cases who have decried the state of the justice system, but I will focus on just one. It's a relatively recent comment by Judge Cole, who says, "If there is one thing we all agree on, it is that our court system is being inappropriately used as a dumping ground for social problems." The throttling of the provincial legal aid plan has been stated by others to have "made it impossible to spend adequate time on most cases unless a lawyer is willing to work for free."

One could go on. There are so many more pages of comments, some of them reported in newspapers, many more reported in conferences, letters that have been written by judges to the Attorney General. It is shameful that we have gotten to this point.

When we catalogue these issues, you wonder where we actually live. Is this Ontario, is this Canada or is this some republic somewhere that pays very little attention to its citizens? When a woman in September is killed as a result of a drunk driver and the case is thrown out because of administrative delays, you know there is something wrong.

When crown attorneys take a survey and that survey finds that they have less than five minutes to spend with their clients before a case, you know there's something wrong. I would recommend to the members of the House opposite that they read that survey of crown attorneys, of people in the system who have no time for preparation, who often have dozens and dozens of bail hearings, who are forced into plea bargaining very difficult cases because they simply don't have the resources.

That of course doesn't speak at all to the issue raised by one of my colleagues about the mess that has been created even in the family support plan and the notion that was advanced by a recent article in the Hamilton Spectator which estimates that two years after the govern-

ment's changes, we still have \$1.2 billion that are owing to women and children, and let those women and children try and go to the courts and get some justice.

Let me say that we support this bill in principle, as I indicated at the beginning; it should come as no surprise. We think that the bill in principle is a good start. How you actually fashion the system that you say you're reforming will be something we'll be watching and the people of Ontario will be watching very closely.

What's important is to see what you do with the bill, what kind of funding formula you will adopt, what kind of people you will appoint, what kind of certificate you will allow. Will the funding be stable? Will the people be fair or will they have an ideological bent? These are questions that are very important and questions that we'll be looking to get an answer on. You can trust that I and my colleagues will continue to press for a justice system that is equitable and not just for those who can afford it.

I would like to leave members of the House with the thoughts of Roy McMurtry because it was Roy McMurtry, as I said, who was responsible for some very enlightened legislation. I think it's important because he says so much about what we should be looking at and what we should be doing. In speaking to a conference on the 10th anniversary of legal aid, he said:

"Every great human endeavour that is worth perpetuating draws its strength from a set of basic principles. I therefore think that it is appropriate from time to time that institutions take a moment to reflect on the principles which brought them forth and the tenets which give them strength and sustain them in their task. In this context I can think of no better statement of the principles and goals of our legal aid system than that made by the Honourable Mr Justice Martin when he was at the bar shortly after the inception of our present plan.

"We live in a society that is deeply committed to improving the material welfare of all, to providing essential medical services and to ensuring equal opportunity for education' — or so we believe, and that's my comment. 'A society so committed will not tolerate the lack of adequate legal representation for those without the means to secure it for themselves. The fundamental postulate of the Ontario legal aid plan is that no person should be precluded by poverty from having necessary and adequate legal services. The Ontario legal aid plan was boldly and imaginatively conceived. While modifications made from time to time take place, it may be confidently asserted that it is capable of making a great contribution to the administration of justice and it may well be a landmark in man's never-ending search for justice."

"As Ontario's Attorney General I had the historical and constitutional responsibility to ensure that civil liberties are protected in this province. Legal aid is perhaps the single most important mechanism we have to turn the dream of equal rights into a reality."

And that is really what it's all about: ensuring that every citizen of Ontario has the same rights, the same liberties, enjoys the same freedom, and that requires a

strong and sound legal aid system. We will be looking for the Attorney General to provide just that.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I would like to compliment my colleague from Downsview for the excellent presentation that she made with respect to the importance of the legal aid plan.

I notice that a number of members on the government side seem to think that this is a rather funny kind of bill, or they think the situation is funny. I even heard some comments earlier about the necessity of lawyers in our system, which they seem to downplay continually. Let me just say that this party believes that people ought to be able to be represented in court. What's been happening under this government, as I will demonstrate and as has already been demonstrated by the member for Downsview, is that a number of individuals who should have been entitled to legal aid and to the certificate so they could get the proper representation in court and out of court have been severely hampered and damaged by this government.

Let me just start off with a quote from the Attorney General back in 1966, Arthur Wishart. He was a highly regarded individual. Let's just see what he said about the original legal aid bill and the principle that underlines legal aid. He said that what this bill does — and it's not just a step forward, it's a long march forward, it is a great reach in this field — is say that no person in this province of Ontario shall be denied the right of counsel, the right of legal aid by reason of his financial status.

That was the underlying principle of the legal aid plan when it was established in 1966, and it has been greatly undermined in this province over the last five years. I would suggest to the members across who seem to degrade lawyers or the legal aid system that they go into any criminal courthouse in Ontario or into any family courthouse and see the effect that your policies and lack of funding have had. Let me just quote from the law society's own report: 75% of all the women and children in family court are unrepresented nowadays. Think about that.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Why not 100%?

Mr Gerretsen: "Why not 100%?" he says. I challenge the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale —

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Don't let our debate interrupt your conversations, please.

Mr Gerretsen: Speaker, I wish that you had put that another way. You said, "Don't let our debate interrupt your conversations." I sure hope that you don't mean that.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): It's called "sarcasm."

Mr Gerretsen: Oh, it's called "sarcasm." It may be sarcasm, and maybe we've reached that end of the night when we could use a little bit of wit and humour in this place, but the issue that I'm talking about is a very serious issue. There are women and children, many of whom for the first time have had anything to do with the family court system, because of family breakdowns, who are totally unrepresented in family court.

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If you don't think that's an issue, then I would welcome to take any one of you members to a family court office in this province on a Friday afternoon, or any other afternoon, and have you see the effect that your lack of funding has had on people in this province. The decisions that are made are going to affect their lives, or are affecting their lives, for many years to come. I totally agree with former Attorney General Arthur Wishart that people ought to be represented. That's a hallmark of our society. It's a conclusion that we reached in 1966, that from now on in Ontario, no one should be unrepresented when they are involved in a court action.

Let me just say that over the last five years or so, regardless of who runs the system, whether it's the law society that runs the system or whether it's an independent agency or a board that you're talking about now, that principle has been greatly compromised. Even in your own memorandum of understanding, you agreed to issue up to 150,000 legal aid certificates per year. Since you've come into office, you've only issued 80,000 per year. This according to a report by the law society which so far has had the management of the legal aid system. In other words, you haven't even lived up to your own contractual obligations. You said to the law society, "We will allow you to issue 154,000 legal aid certificates per year." You've only come up to about 80,000 per year.

There seem to be all sorts of comments made about lawyers not being needed in our system and all that sort of thing. Yes, I realize that a significant number of people out there haven't got too many good things to say about a lawyer. But I know of very few people, when they're involved in a court action, other than maybe if they're involved in a small claims court action, which quite often they do themselves, who would rather go to court without a lawyer than with one, because people realize that the representation they get is greatly superior than what they themselves would bring to the situation without the representation.

What else does the law society say? It says that in some courts up to 80% of the people do not have lawyers.

Let's take a look at what has happened to the actual applications that have been made to the legal aid system. In 1996-97, which is the last year for which we have any statistics, 29% of all the applications were refused. That is a great deal more than in 1992-93, when this downward trend started, when 14% of the applications were refused.

The law society goes on to say that a very limited number of people who have been turned down for legal aid have been able to pay for a lawyer on their own. In other words, they just do it by themselves and try to do the best they can and, as has already been indicated by the member for Downsview, quite often put a judge in a position where it's very difficult for him or her to deal with the situation.

Again, the number of family law certificates has been cut by 75%. That's unacceptable. The point I'm trying to make is that no matter what kind of organization you set up, whether it's part of the law society or whether it's an independent agency, if you don't fund it properly, then the

kind of services that people have come to expect simply won't be there.

This is like many other situations as well. Let me just tell you about three cases that we heard about in our office today which are all as a result of government underfunding. These are not in the legal aid area, but these deal with community care agency centres. Let me just tell you about other lack-of-funding situations and how they are affecting the people of Ontario.

We heard today from a 90-year-old woman with osteoporosis and bad eyesight who had had two hours a week for personal care from a community care agency. She has been cut off as of last Friday. Why? Because of funding. Here we have a 90-year-old woman who for two hours a week has had care so that she can get on with her life the best way that she is able to, and she's been cut off because of lack of funding. This is the same basic principle that underlies the legal aid bill here: If there's no funding available, it doesn't matter what kind of framework you set up.

How about a lady with muscular dystrophy who has been receiving home care — think about this, Speaker — since 1996 on a continual basis? For three years this person has been able to make it at her home alone with a little bit of help from a community care agency. Now she finds, after two and a half years, that she has been disqualified.

How about the family with an 89-year-old woman who has Alzheimer's? They've kept her at home for seven years. She received three hours of care per week. You know what's happened to her? She's been cut back to three hours of care every two weeks.

A couple trying to keep their 79-year-old mother at home, who is legally blind, had their home care cut off within the last week.

The point I'm trying to make is that here we have a government that basically is trying to sell to the people of Ontario the notion of, "Well, we can get rid of the hospitals, or a good 35 of them, and we will take that money and put it into community care." We know that exactly for what it is. I won't use that word because it would be unparliamentary, but we know that kind of funding is not there for the community care agencies. Here are these people who used to have hospital care, an expensive amount of money, I realize; hospital care costs a lot on a per diem basis. All they were asking for was a little bit of community care that we told them we basically guaranteed them when we cut off their hospital, as they've done in Kingston as of today with the Hotel Dieu Hospital.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): They're closing that?

Mr Gerretsen: They've closed the hospital. The court appeal apparently was unsuccessful. It's been finalized now as far as I know. They've closed that hospital. The money was supposed to go to community care and it didn't. I know you'd like me to get back to the topic at hand but, Speaker, it is all related. It is all a question of underfunding.

I was at the Premier's Conference on Jobs and Prosperity in Kingston today, a conference that the Minister of Labour was at as well. It was an interesting time. A lot of the reporters asked me, "Well, is this sort of a pre-election ploy by the government?" I said, "That's for you to say." I'm not a very cynical individual. I would really hope that this government is sincere about creating jobs and prosperity for people. The question could be asked: Why didn't they do it three years ago? Why did they wait for three and a half years? But I'm not a cynical individual. Everybody can draw their own conclusion about that.

But what was very interesting — I know this is an aside, and I'll come back to the topic in a minute — is that all of the people from the public sector, whether you're talking about people who headed the colleges or universities or who were involved in some imaginative ways to create jobs in the eastern Ontario area, basically looked for some sort of seed funding, money. We heard from one college president today who basically said: "The system is at risk. The infrastructure is deteriorating and unless we do something very quickly, it's going to disappear or it's going to be damaged beyond repair."

Interjection: Throw money at it.

Mr Gerretsen: They say, "Throw money at it." I'm just repeating what I heard today. That was one group of people. There was another group of people who said, "Give us more tax cuts." Of course the government basically said, "We're going to do both." It can't be done. It simply cannot be done.

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If we really care about the infrastructure in this province, whether we're talking about the infrastructure that's in the ground or on the ground, or whether we're talking about the hospital institutions or the colleges and universities in this province, or whether we care about a legal aid system that actually works and in which people can get represented who cannot afford to pay for a lawyer, then money has to be put aside for that. It's not happening, and it's not happening with this bill either.

We've had these kinds of discussions here over the last three years on numerous occasions, that this government basically believes in cutting everything down to its lowest common denominator, or maybe to no denominator at all. It just wants to cut, cut, cut, and hopes that somehow the people of Ontario will buy this.

I say to you and to the people of Ontario that if we really care about some of the basic rights and principles that we have established in this province, then we had better be prepared to make sure that the infrastructure of that system is in a good state of health.

It is not in a good state of health when 80% of the people who go to a family court — as I mentioned before, for many of these women it is the first time they have ever been involved with the legal system. They now want to make sure that their children are protected and that they get the proper kind of support from, in most cases, their husbands. These people are confused when they get there. Quite often it has been a very traumatic step before they even come there. The least we can do as a society is to

make sure that these people within that system that is totally foreign to them, where they see judges in black robes and lawyers dashing around — I've seen it. I've been involved in that scene, not lately but many years ago, and people are confused. If we cannot even provide them in those cases with the ability to get proper and effective legal representation, then I think we have failed as a society.

It isn't just me saying that. It is the former Attorney General of this province, Roy McMurtry, the Chief Justice, who used to belong to a party they used to call the Progressive Conservative Party.

Hon Mr Flaherty: He still belongs to it. What are you talking about?

Mr Gerretsen: "He still belongs to it," they say. I say you're wrong in that. I've got a very high regard for Chief Justice McMurtry and I am sure he is not involved politically at all. I'm absolutely convinced of that. But that party he belonged to no longer exists. That was a party that for over 40 years in this province tried to build some sense of consensus and was quite effective at it.

What we have now is a Reform government — not Reform in the sense of a Liberal government, because you may recall Liberals used to be Reformers back in the 1830s and 1840s; that's how we started — Reform in the sense of being a right-wing party that basically says to people: "We made it on our own. Why the heck can't you?" That's their attitude, and never mind the people at the bottom third of the economic scale: "That's just their tough luck. We can't be bothered with them." That's the attitude of this government.

We've seen it with respect to health care. We've seen it with respect to education where everything points to a two-tier system. You can get the services if you've got enough money in your pocket, and if the other person doesn't, it's just too bad, because more and more of the basic rights and principles that this society has been based on for the last 30 or 40 years are being eroded.

I say to you, yes, maybe this legal aid bill, by setting up an independent agency, is a good way to go, but all we're talking about is the framework, and the framework means absolutely nothing if the program is underfunded. I know the positive spin you'll try to put on this, that this is a great bill. I'm saying to you that it may be as a framework, but if you don't fund it adequately then you have failed once again as you have failed so often in the last three and a half years. Thank you very much, Speaker, for your undivided attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Silipo: I want to comment on the presentations by the members for Downsview and for Kingston and The Islands. I know that in their presentations at various points they both touched on the importance of people having access to the justice system and on the need for us to ensure through the legal aid plan that people of all means, in this case certainly the poorest of our citizens, have that same equality of access to the justice system to defend their rights that we want for all of our citizens. If that isn't there, then none of it means very much. If that isn't there,

then there isn't any sense of equality. If that isn't there, then there isn't any sense of justice, to be true to that word and to all it means.

I know they also talked, and I appreciated their talking about the need for adequate funding to be provided in this area and indeed in other areas of public policy. This is something that while it isn't directly addressed by the legislation, it is obvious that the legislation forms the premise for the system that will follow. This is an issue that's going to have to be dealt with by this government and subsequent governments in ensuring that there is a good legislative framework, which I think this piece of legislation actually goes a long way towards providing, as I indicated earlier. I think it provides a good shift in terms of the new government's model with a majority of citizen members on the board of governors.

There are going to have to be some improvements made to the legislation. I look forward to the committee dealing with this, having some hearings and listening to people who work on a day-to-day basis in the legal aid community and the legal clinic community, because they will bring a particular focus to this that I hope the government will listen to.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I welcome the comments of the member for Downsview. They were most thoughtful. Perhaps I can assist her, however, in regard to the year 1997-98. If I'm not mistaken, she stated there was a cost overrun in the management of the plan by the law society and I believe that is incorrect. For the year 1997-98, \$167 million was provided for certificates. They also allotted \$30 million for administration and \$32 million for clinics, a total of \$230 million. That was the amount that was actually spent in the year 1997-98. As a matter of fact, in effect they had an underrun, not an overrun, because they were repaying a loan that was taken out in the 1995-96 year in order to pay for overruns in that year. In the current year the plan is running a surplus. This is allowing for enhanced services of the plan, increasing services especially in family law, criminal law and other high-demand areas.

I look forward to working with the member for Downsview in committee when we examine this bill. I also noted with interest the comments of the member for Kingston and The Islands and I thank him again for the comic relief he provides this chamber.

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Mr Michael Brown: I want to compliment the member for Downsview and the member for Kingston and The Islands on very informative presentations. I had, as most members probably did, some representations made to me about this bill. I think, for example, of Ken Bondy of the legal clinic in Elliot Lake who came to see me about it. The feedback I'm getting is that basically the principle of this bill is right. They are very concerned, however, with the appointment process and they're concerned that we get people who are truly independent. There is nothing in the bill that spells out how people will be appointed to the governance body. Given that, it's easy for many of us to

be worried and concerned that they will not be independent.

In our constituency it would be fair to say that there are also some synergies that may be looked at down the road. It may be possible, for example, and Mr Bondy suggested this to me, that in the smaller communities of northern Ontario where legal aid clinics exist, there may be at least some opportunity to share some space with the people who come to issue legal aid certificates and some other administrative matters which may save everybody some money and provide better service. I think that's something we could look forward to happening.

I would say, however, that the lack of representation in family courts — I understand that 67% or about two thirds of women and children in family court are not represented — has caused great grief, especially if you're working on family responsibility cases where the money is supposed to be flowing. A lot of the problem often is at the court. This government has to address those issues.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I too enjoyed the comments from both the members for Downsview and for Kingston and The Islands. Both are most honourable members and they're also lawyers, members of that other honourable profession.

Legal aid lawyers and service providers lobbied hard to have the board detailed in legislation. Let me share with you an outline of what they've said: ironically, perhaps, but the majority of the appointed board members must not be lawyers and must reflect the geographic diversity of the province — vast and magnificent — and as a whole the board should have knowledge, skills and experience in the areas the Attorney General considers appropriate, including business, finance, law, operation of courts and tribunals — well, why couldn't they be lawyers because they should have a good understanding of business and finance and it seems it goes hand in hand with the other parts of the mandate? — legal needs of low-income individuals and disadvantaged communities, operations of clinics, and social and economic circumstances associated with special legal needs of low-income individuals and disadvantaged communities.

This is a challenge to the Attorney General, a person I respect immensely, but sitting on committee, only too often we found that as a prerequisite to be appointed to a government board or agency, you had to be a card-carrying member of the Progressive Conservative Party. It's very difficult to be a card-carrying member in good standing and address the needs of the disadvantaged and the poor.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Downsview has two minutes to respond.

Ms Castrilli: I want to thank everyone who intervened and commented on my comments.

Let me say to the member for Cambridge, I think he and I were talking about different years, but there is also to say that there certainly was much more money required in the system and the system remains underfunded. On that we can agree, even using your 1997-98 figures.

Ladies and gentlemen, the situation is quite clear and quite simple. There is a crisis in legal aid. We all recognize it. The Attorney General has been the first to recognize it or he wouldn't have appointed two commissions to study it. I urge him to take to heart the recommendations that have been made by those commissions. It's not simply a question of setting up a framework for legal aid. You can create the best corporation in the world. If that corporation has no funds, no assets, no clout, no power, it is not going to be able to do the work it needs to do. The work it needs to do in this particular case is to ensure the rights of citizens, to ensure the equality of citizens, to ensure that everybody, regardless of how much money they make at the end of the day, has the same shot at having their rights observed in a court of law. That's what we're talking about. What we're really saying is that you're no better and no worse because you're poor or because you're rich.

Take heed. We will support this legislation because we think it's a good first step, but it is just that, a good first step. We will want to see that you make some significant steps forward to ensure there is a system that works, there is a system that represents the people, there is a system that respects individuals and their right to protect their own rights in this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Martin: Earlier today I was in Kingston, the hometown of one of the previous speakers, covering a conference, one in a series of conferences that's happening across this province over the next few weeks as this government goes about the task, the job of trying to paint a picture of themselves that is different from the picture that most of us who have lived and tried to work and operate in Ontario have experienced over the last two years. It's a feel-good; it's "Look what we've done," and, "Look what else we will do," and, "Give us another mandate and it will all be wonderful and everybody will be better served."

We know, those of us who are close to the ground, who are plugged into our communities and talk to our constituents, that in Ontario today there is a lot of difficulty, a lot of unease, a lot of disease among the populace out there as they look at their lives and how they will manage and whether they will have a job and whether their kids will have education or whether they will have health care when they get sick.

This piece of legislation that we have in front of us here tonight is very important in the context of all that. It's a piece of legislation that will take us forward as a civilized group of people in Ontario to make sure that there is in place adequate and sufficient legal representation for people who find themselves in contravention of the law or in a situation where they must challenge somebody else in light of the law as to their rights and what they have coming. I'm afraid that in the midst of the fact that this legislation is in principle good legislation, is progressive and will take us forward, we may lose sight of the damage that has been done to those people that this legislation will serve probably the most and be the most important to.

We must not forget for a second in this place, as we deal with pieces of legislation such as the one that's here, that many people across this province have had their rights taken away from them, have had their source of well-being taken away from them in such a significantly large amount that they find themselves sometimes disempowered, almost paralyzed, as they try to take advantage of the opportunities that are out there. A legal aid system that is at arm's length from government, that is run in a way that recognizes that the voice of those who use the system is probably the most important voice to be heard in the establishment of guidelines and processes — that when we do this kind of thing and put it in place we make sure that we do that.

We will see over the next, I would suggest, two or three months, five or six months, as we move from here to the ultimate calling of election by this government a series of pieces of legislation that they've had in their back pockets that other governments, our own included, have worked on very hard to put in place so that it is ready when a government with the moral fibre decides to take it forward and do the right thing with it and make it the order of the day.

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I'm sure we will see a number of those kinds of initiatives coming forward, and it will all be done in an exercise to try and distract us from the attack that's been perpetrated on those who are most unable to deal with that. It's in the context of all of this that I think we have to look at this piece of legislation here tonight.

One of the big questions I have in that context is, will there be ultimately, at the end of the day, enough money to go the distance, to do the job that is required? Will there be enough money to cover all the needs that will come forward that are out there? We've seen both sides of that coin over the last three years. We've seen in one instance, because this government I believe perpetrated a squeeze on the legal aid system to the point where those who were in charge of it began to anticipate that there would be a shortfall, that there wouldn't be enough money, where they began to tighten up the rules; they began to raise the bar and they began to change —

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): They had problems under your government. Tell the people that they had problems under your government.

Mr Martin: They had troubles under every government, but most particularly under your government, because you imposed a system of support to people that was lacking in so many substantial and essential and important ways that people in this province over the last three years have had a hard time just making ends meet.

We saw à la the legal aid system a lot of nervousness, a lot of anxiety, a lot of worry among everybody concerned: the clinics, the lawyers themselves and most particularly those who were in need of legal counsel in the situation that they found themselves in, that there wouldn't be enough money. Decisions were made that certain groups of people in certain circumstances would not be allowed any more to access legal aid.

I've had them into my office. I've had people sitting in front of me, after I went home to Sault Ste Marie on the weekend and talked to my constituents, who shared with me the challenges they face particularly in confrontation with this government, that they no longer could get the kind of legal aid they needed to help them work their way through the system that is becoming much more complicated as time moves on. The system was tightened up and people were denied access under this government.

Then we find a few months later that there was lots of money in the system but it wasn't being spent because of the control, both real and imagined, by this government on that system that stopped people from getting what they needed. We had a whole crowd of people who needed legal advice, who needed a lawyer, who needed somebody to go with them as they went before the courts or as they confronted their adversaries in the various ways that happen in the democracy we live in. They were told by the system that there wasn't enough money, when all the way along there was money if somebody had just looked hard enough for it. The reason they didn't was that they were being told both directly and indirectly by this government to be careful. This government was sending messages by the various things they had done, particularly to the poor in this province, particularly to the unemployed in this province, those who found themselves in need of assistance of some sort. They were told indirectly, by what was being done to those people, that they weren't important, that they weren't a priority and that people who had the resources were not to spend it on them.

I've said it here on a number of occasions in this House: What kind of a message are you sending to the people of Ontario and the people who run organizations such as the legal aid system in this province when you take, as your first act in government, 21.6% out of the income of those who are most in need in the communities we all live in? What kind of a message are you sending out to those people and to everybody else? What kind of a message does that send?

Not long after you took the 21.6% away from those who needed it most to feed their children, to put clothes on their backs, to pay the rent and make sure they had shelter in this very difficult climate that we have in Canada as winter comes at us, the next thing you did was you took away their services. You took away and you closed offices that provided services to those who were most in need among us. After that you closed down the advocacy offices. It became more and more important that we continue to have in place the legal clinics that we have seen across this province and that we continue to allow them to do the work they do and that we continue to have a legal aid system that provides access for people to the courts as they try to get their problems resolved.

The fear I have, as we all agree that this is a piece of legislation that we can support with some reservations — and I'll talk about them in just a couple of minutes — is that there won't be enough money at the end of the day. That would be consistent with what this government has done time and time again over the last three years to

almost every organization and government operation that provided and continues to provide, to the degree they can, services to those in our province who are in need. There's this feeling, there's this sense that comes from the government that they put out there — because actually it starts with the Common Sense Revolution, wherein they very clearly speak of their view of what it is that the legal system should look like. As a matter of fact, those of us who read it with any seriousness, and some of us didn't before the last election because we didn't anticipate that this government would —

Interjection: Oops.

Mr Martin: Yes. Oops, exactly — that the Progressive Conservatives of 1995 would end up being the government in 1995, and now in 1998. In that document you state very clearly that legal aid is something that you see is on the periphery, something that's kind of nice if you can afford it but — pardon?

Mr Silipo: One of those fringe programs.

Mr Martin: One of those fringe programs, one of those programs that's nice if you can afford it, but if you can't, that's all right. Those people will find a way, pull themselves up by their bootstraps, cash in the bottles, go to mom and dad, whatever, wherever they can find a few bucks —

Mr Pouliot: Squeegee.

Mr Martin: Yes, squeegee kids — get yourself a few bucks and hire a lawyer and get out there doing, not understanding for a second the very complicated and difficult and sophisticated legal challenges that all of us, no matter what strata you exist on today in Ontario, from time to time get ourselves into, situations where very professional legal advice is required, particularly when you consider the fact that most times poor people, in trying to get their rights addressed, are up against organizations and institutions and corporations that have at their disposal unlimited amounts of money to hire the best of lawyers so that they can win their cases and have their rights protected, and what they need to have in place to make sure they keep up their standard of living and all that that entails.

It's really important, as we look at this piece of legislation and at some of the other pieces of legislation that will come forward in the next two, three, four, five weeks, and after Christmas when we come back to this place and they all present as motherhood and apple pie and everything good for all the people, that they are being passed in an environment of consistent and interminable attack on the common good in this province, on services that we all took for granted would be there and that governments would protect and actually build on and have evolve in a way that speaks to universal access and people being able to participate — this government has in fact taken us down a different road. For the first time in the history of this province we have, in many instances, whether it's how we deal with labour relations, how we deal with the environment, how we manage our natural resources or how we take care of our roads, taken a huge step backwards, taken a different tack, a different track.

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It could have been otherwise, absolutely, and it can be otherwise, because the very interesting and hopeful thing in the middle of all this is that within the next six months, certainly before the spring of 2000, there will be an election in this province. There will be a day of reckoning. There will be a time when you, in all your glory, will have to go before the public and present your track record, your story, your history, your three and a half years or whatever the duration of your stay in power ends up being, and ask the people to give you an endorsement and perhaps another chance.

This legislation seems to be something which, after we've discussed it for a bit and hopefully had a chance to present some amendments, had a chance to take it out so we can hear what the general public has to say about it, we'll probably support. But it has to be seen in the context of the downsizing that's happening and the taking away of dollars that are absolutely necessary if an organization such as this one is going to do its job, particularly when you consider the diminishing of the ability of so many groups that were established over the last 10 or 15 years in this province under various stripes of government, Conservative, Liberal, New Democrat, to carry out an advocacy role on behalf of people. When you wipe out that ability for groups to advocate, on behalf of either themselves or other people, you have to have something in place that will do that job.

The second point I want to make tonight is that my fear and hope all wrapped up in one is that this isn't just another exercise by this government for more control and more power. It presents well, as does everything the government does. Here's this arm's-length agency that's going to oversee this very important piece of work, to deliver a resource to people out there who need it. But will it, at the end of the day, simply be another vehicle that this government can control and tell what to do? I'll talk in a few minutes about the ability of the Attorney General to appoint members to the board, in particular to appoint the transition board which will set up the framework out of which this will flow. Will this be just another exercise, in the first instance, of control?

Then, in the second instance, as we've seen so often over the last couple of years as the government has downloaded responsibility, as the government has downloaded the cost of services on to other levels of government or agencies, when things go wrong, when things don't work out as they are painted, when people begin to complain about the fact that they're not getting the services they need, that a system is beginning to fall apart or break down, they can blame somebody else. They can put the blame on this so-called arm's-length, extra-parliamentary organization for that which they themselves imposed in the first place.

If you look at the legislation and read through the piece that talks about the appointment of the board, it says, "Five persons selected by the Attorney General from a list" provided by the Law Society of Upper Canada. The second part says, "Five persons recommended by the

Attorney General" and "One person, who shall be the chair...selected by the Attorney General from a list" provided by a committee composed "of the Attorney General...the treasurer of the law society...and a third party agreed upon by the Attorney General and the treasurer of the law society."

That's one, two, three, four, five, six times the Attorney General is mentioned when it comes to the appointment of this board. That's not to speak at all of the fact that the transition board will be completely his appointment. The work of that transition board, of course, will be driven by the edict of this government, through the Attorney General, to make sure that at the end of the day they have indeed the ability to control, to have power over. Then ultimately, when things go wrong — and I think they will, because the money won't be there to deliver the service, because that has been the track record of this government — they can blame somebody else. They can shift it off of themselves and they can come out looking like the good guy: "Look, we've set up this arm's-length organization. It was supported by everybody. We've done the right thing. It isn't operating in a way that is in the best interests of those who are complaining, but we're not to blame." That's the track record of this government and, sad to say, it will continue to be.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I listened intently to the member for Sault Ste Marie and he briefly touched on the bill. I thought he might have also wanted to mention that between 1989 and 1994 legal aid spending in this province doubled, actually doubled, yet there were growing problems with the level of service and the quality of service.

With Bill 68, the Legal Aid Services Act, we're fixing the problem that previous governments left the people of Ontario with. During the last three years, this government has worked successfully with the Law Society of Upper Canada to bring legal aid spending under control. This government is committed to providing the proposed organization through Bill 68 with three years of stable funding at the 1998-99 level. This stable funding will enable the proposed organization to provide high-quality services, to develop flexible and innovative ways to deliver services, and to run private projects to test their new approaches across the entire province. These new alternative forms of delivery would complement legal aid clinics and certificates provided to legal aid clients to hire lawyers, which would continue as the foundation for the delivery of services in this province.

This new organization, Legal Aid Ontario, would be more open and accountable for the use of public funds. In other words, they would be more accountable to the taxpayers of this province, and this is a good thing. This would ensure that Legal Aid Ontario's annual budget of \$230 million delivers the maximum amount of high-quality services for those Ontarians who need them the most.

The accountability through Bill 68, the Legal Aid Services Act, would be achieved through the following

measures: public representation on the board of directors, an annual report to be tabled in this Legislature and an annual audit to be performed by the Provincial Auditor. These are all measures of accountability.

Other accountability measures would include a memorandum of understanding, in other words a contract between the organization and the Ministry of the Attorney General. The memorandum of understanding would require the new organization to submit the following items to the Ministry of the Attorney General: annual budgets, three-year funding projections, annual business plans and multi-year strategic plans.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The member for Sault Ste Marie recognizes that right around the province the need for legal aid is very pronounced because there are many people who have found themselves in dire circumstances as a result of many of the policies which have been implemented by this government, which tend to be more difficult for people of the lower-income bracket in the province.

These members have to recognize that if you're going to put these people down, if you are going to cut any benefits they might have and make it more difficult to qualify for benefits, at least you can allow them the opportunity to appeal when, for instance, they're hit with an unfair increase in their rent.

A lot of people in this province don't realize that you have made sure there's no rent control. A lot of people don't realize that yet because they haven't moved out of their rental dwelling. When they move out they'll find out that rent control is removed, and when they try to find a new place, it's likely, if it just opened up, that the cost of that is going to go up. They will not be able to appeal it in the courts. They'll need some advice and assistance from someone in the legal field, perhaps a legal assistance clinic, to provide that advice. They're going to be in very difficult straits. A lot of senior citizens in this province don't realize that the Harris government has ended rent control, has ended the protection these senior citizens have had. Students, who move very often and are already hit with huge increases in their tuition, are going to find that their rent has gone up considerably as well.

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Mr Silipo: I want to commend my colleague the member for Sault Ste Marie for his comments on this bill. Having listened to him numerous times here in the House, I can understand his sense of criticism towards the government, his sense of skepticism towards this particular piece of legislation. He notes, as I do, that the framework proposed by this legislation is useful, could actually lead to an improvement in the way in which the legal aid plan is governed and administered, but I think he's quite correct to be critical and skeptical about what this will mean if the appropriate funding isn't continued or isn't there, indeed improved where it needs to be improved. That is something that needs to be looked at very seriously.

As I said earlier, I look forward to this bill going to committee, to the discussion that will take place. I hope the government will take seriously the good criticism that

no doubt will be there from people who work in the legal aid community, people who understand that while they may agree and will agree with a number of recommendations coming forward from the McCamus report, and reflected in this legislation, there are many improvements that can be made to this legislation to ensure it actually will work, and to also call upon the government to make sure the funding continues to be there to ensure that the services we want for all our citizens continue to be available.

If that isn't there, as the member for Sault Ste Marie has indicated, then this will simply be another slap in the face to the many Ontarians across the province whom this government has already hurt severely through the cuts to social assistance, through cuts to many other services. That is why, when he speaks about those issues and links them to what this government is doing in the area of legal aid, the link is very important and needs to be kept in mind.

Mr Gilchrist: I'm pleased to make a few comments on the presentation made by our colleague from Sault Ste Marie. There's no doubt, when he reflects on some of the cost pressures, that he's absolutely correct. There are any number of reasons why in the past perhaps there have not been the number of people dealt with that should have been, given the funding envelope that was there before.

Many of the members in this House have travelled on the legislative committees over the last three years. We were quite disturbed earlier this year when we had the second round of hearings on the Tenant Protection Act, and almost every second presentation was from a legal aid clinic and by their own admission 20% of the resources of the average legal aid clinic was spent on advocacy, not on dealing with the people who were coming in their door who needed help with the courts, who needed help with various tribunals. They instead decided to politic. You're right: If you want to take the pressures, add 20% to the amount of work they could have been processing before.

There's another issue the member should know about. Federal policy alone determines eligibility for immigration and refugee status. Between 1991 and 1997, federal funding dropped from \$14.4 million to \$3.8 million. Last year 6,000 legal aid certificates were issued in the course of pursuing immigration and refugee issues. But here's the zinger: Those certificates cost \$15.1 million to process and Ontario paid three out of every four dollars.

You're right: There are cost pressures in the system and I hope you will join us in continuing the appeals to the federal government to pick up their cost under the law to fund legal aid for immigration or refugee cases.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie has two minutes to respond.

Mr Martin: I want, first of all, to thank the member for St Catharines for his appropriate comments, and he knows that what I'm talking about is the need to make sure we have in place the supports and resources to help those this government has hammered over the last three years; and the member for Dovercourt, who talks about, very rightly, the need to have adequate funding. That

brings me to the member for Scarborough Centre, who talks about putting more money into the system but it's like everything else you've done: You make an announcement, you say there's more money going in, but the money never goes in and it never gets spent because you've raised the bar so high that nobody can qualify any more.

The example just recently: Last April you announced that you were going to put some \$250 million into hospital care emergency service. It never got spent. Where is it? It's the same thing with the legal aid system. You announce that you're going to put the money in and then you raise the bar to a level so that nobody can qualify. You scare the dickens out of the people running the program, that if they spend too much, they won't get any more. At the end of the day the group that suffers the most are those who need it the most, and you hammer them.

Don't give me this line that you put more money in. We've head you over and over again over the last three years telling us how much money you're going to put into this pot, how much money you're going to put into that pot, and at the end of the day it's not spent. There's nothing there. Or if there is any money spent, the bar is raised so high that nobody can qualify any more. That's the way they operate. "What did we do? Nothing."

The member for Scarborough East talks about the 20% that legal clinics spend on advocacy. He obviously doesn't understand, and it doesn't surprise me that this government doesn't understand, the concept of prevention and promotion, which cuts back, ultimately, the need for legal aid for individuals.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): For those watching tonight who are interested, I'd like to point out that the member for Lambton and his son, Marc, are in the members' gallery. Thank you for joining us. It's good to see the youth of Ontario up at this time of night watching this rather important debate.

The member for Downsview I think has made the most appropriate and direct comments on the bill. I believe she's a lawyer, so respectfully — I know how much time the parliamentary assistant, Mr Martiniuk, the member for Cambridge sitting here in front of me, has put into this to get it right. I heard the member for Downsview say very clearly on three separate occasions during her almost one hour of discussion — I tell the members I've only got 20 minutes and I've no intention of sharing it — heard her clearly admit in the open, right here and for the record, that she was in support of this bill.

This brings a lot of hope to me, and I'm not a lawyer, that we're doing the right thing. But why are we doing this? I think you always have to understand the reason, the motive: Why are we doing all these changes? The people of Ontario are saying to us, "Tell us the motive." The motive here: Clearly what has happened, like everything else in the period between 1989 and 1994 — the member for Scarborough Centre has told us that they're spending double. The member for the rest of Scarborough, basically, has told us that there's too much money being spent on advocacy. But what did the government do? The

government did the right thing. It's the right track, wrong track issue. We took the right track again: proposed changes of a comprehensive review of the Ontario legal aid plan, which is 30 years old, 30 years of neglect, technically, abuse perhaps by all partners, by people who perhaps didn't need a legal aid certificate and perhaps others involved.

A very well recognized legal scholar, Professor John McCamus, one of Canada's legal scholars, formed the blueprint for this document. I respectfully say that in my brief breeze through this bill, which is about 25 pages long and has 10 parts, this bill really deals with three primary factors. First, it brings some accountability into the legal aid system. That's very important for all the participants. No one here argues with the rights of individuals to have the dignity and the protection of the law. I certainly don't, and I don't think anyone watching here tonight or participating does either.

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Then it deals with the whole issue of governance: the separation of the governance model from either the law society or the Attorney General, which is very important and fundamental, that it's arm's-length; and the structure of that governance model, the membership so it's not monopolized by one group; and the independence, arm's-length from government — I think that's reviewed very thoroughly in the bill; then, of course, getting back to my initial point, is the whole issue of stable funding.

Those four planks in Bill 68 — it's quite a small bill we're dealing with — are a very important, solid foundation, for the very vulnerable people in society.

We've had memorandums of understanding and the law society has overrun those. Its system technically, it could be argued, has failed the people it was designed to serve.

What have we done? As a government, I believe we've done the right thing. We've brought forward legislation that some could indeed, given our extensive amount of legislation, argue that more changed. But really the intent here and the motive I've reviewed is absolutely critical. Before I go into any, all of the speakers here tonight have gone to some length — we all pretty well have the same briefing notes.

I found the most interesting part to be the preamble to the bill. It's very self-explanatory. You really don't need the formal briefing notes the ministry staff provide us with. You don't have to be a Rhodes scholar to be here. We're just average citizens who are trying to review what's really the legislation's intention.

If you look under the preamble, "The bill incorporates Legal Aid Ontario, a corporation without share capital, that is charged with the mandate of establishing and operating a system for providing legal aid services to low-income individuals in a cost-effective and efficient manner." How much clearer would you like it?

Then you have the corporation's mandate. Let's read that section. I'm reading, for the record, right from Bill 68, which was presented in this House on October 6. With the goodwill of all parties, we'll have this thing through to help the people it's intended to help.

"The corporation is required to provide legal aid services in the areas of criminal law, family law, clinic law and mental health law. The corporation may provide legal aid services in other areas of civil law, subject to the Lieutenant Governor in Council's power to identify areas of civil law, types of civil cases and types of civil proceedings for which the corporation shall not provide legal aid services. The bill also specifies proceedings for which legal aid services are not available."

For those people seeking to utilize this legal service, applying for a certificate, it's very clearly outlined in the schedules in this Bill 68.

I'd just like to clarify — I have limited time but I think it's important to go through this, as laborious as it is. It's a detailed bill.

"The board of directors" — this is the governance model we're talking about; this section is very important — "of the corporation will be composed of 11 persons selected as follows: five persons selected by the Attorney General from a list provided by the Law Society of Upper Canada" — clearly the law society still has their finger in this — "five persons recommended by the Attorney General and one person, who would be the chair of the board, selected by the Attorney General from a list provided by a committee composed of the Attorney General (or his or her designate), the treasurer of the law society (or his or her designate) and a third party agreed upon by the Attorney General and the treasurer of the law society (or their designates)."

It almost sounds sort of like the Constitution here. A lawyer probably wrote this.

"The president of the corporation is a non-voting member of the board," which is very good. Of course there's an administrative function in that role and they're non-voting; they're there to make sure the thing is managed properly.

"The majority of the appointed board members must not be lawyers."

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): That's a good idea.

Mr O'Toole: I think that's a very practical idea.

We're not going to be co-opted. There may have been the argument that the law society just had a bit too much control of this. I clearly think that most lawyers, like most professions, really want this governance model to work. I may be naive there, but I think they've agreed to this. I understand there's been a tremendous amount of consultation which, in my limited time, I will review.

"As a whole, the board should have knowledge, skills and experience in the areas the Attorney General considers appropriate, including business, finance, law, the operation of the courts and tribunals, the legal needs of low-income individuals and disadvantaged communities, the operation of clinics and the social and economic circumstances associated with the legal needs of low-income individuals and disadvantaged communities. The board members are appointed for two- or three-year terms, and cannot be dismissed before the end of their appointed term without cause."

So we have an arm's-length governance model, we have a clarified mandate of the function of the service being provided and we've provided stable funding for a three-year period guaranteed at the rate that was expended in the 1997 budget year of some \$230 million.

I think we really have a perfect model here, and clearly there's a transitional period, I may add, as well in this bill, that transitional period between where the law society ends and this new, non-share capital Legal Aid Ontario Corp commences operation. In fact, there is a schedule in here for transferring assets from the existing offices to the new organization.

But I go back again to the motive, the fact that we've had 30 years, it's been reviewed, this is a blueprint as outlined by law professor John McCamus, one of Canada's legal scholars. I've also reviewed what the services provided are for those vulnerable people in society, what services can be provided to ensure stability. I suspect there have been some overruns in the past and the memoranda of understanding were often not complied with, but what was the process even there?

In my notes that were provided here, I am glad to see this has happened. During the legal aid review, major legal community and user groups were involved in public hearings. The review received more than 200 written submissions. Following its release in September 1997, our government consulted widely with consumer groups like the Elizabeth Fry Society, the John Howard Society, the St Leonard's Society of Canada, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, consumer groups working with disadvantaged communities, the Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped, the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly, Aboriginal Legal Services, the National Council of Welfare, the Canadian Mental Health Association. So we have the vulnerable groups in society and, of course, as you might expect, the lawyers' groups, including the law society, the Canadian Bar Association, the Criminal Lawyers' Association, the family lawyers' association, the County and District Law Presidents' Association and the refugee lawyers' associations. Clearly, those break down the main areas where they would be practising law.

It's my understanding from the notes here that there were four observations that are consistent across the whole thing. First, the plan had to be, as I pointed out before, independent of both the government and the provider groups, and it also had to be accountable, well-managed and fiscally stable.

At the risk of repeating myself, for those who may be now going to tune in to The National — it's a little early for that, because I still have 10 minutes left. There are other shows on as well at this time of night, of course. But the bill here is important. I wouldn't for one moment — on all sides of the House here we recognize that we are trying to move forward. It's really a question of justice for all. That may be an overworked phrase, but this is justice for all in a stable kind of funding environment.

I'm just looking here at some of the other information I would like to share with the members. The main elements

of the Legal Aid Services Act are that the act establishes the mandate for governance, structure and accountability for a new organization called legal aid. That's the whole bill in a nutshell. We've covered that to some extent. The governance — they aren't all lawyers. It defines for the client list what the available services are and stabilizes funding. I think we know now clearly where we're going with the legal aid plan in Ontario.

2120

What particularly appeals to me is that this government never fails to try to move forward. It tries to find balance and it tries to find fiscal accountability with the taxpaying public, my constituents and yours.

I've heard other speakers here tonight, and their solution to everything is to spend more money. If you think through and you've got the proper governance model, whether it's a school board governance model or it's a hospital — in the hospital sector in Durham region we've just gone from seven different governance models down to one board of governance for the Lakeridge Health Corp. I would expect to see fewer health care dollars being spent on administration. I think previous speakers have made the same point here. The less administrative burden we have on this \$230 million, the more money will actually go to front-line services.

I believe the same argument could be made in many of the restructurings this government has taken upon itself in legislative and other initiatives. I commend the previous NDP government, under the John Sweeney commission. They looked at the school governance models, some 170 school boards in the province of Ontario. We've reduced that to some 63 or 67 boards. That means that money is going into services for students.

I believe we have a similar model here, on a little smaller scale than what I've referred to. But it's clarified the overlap that perhaps was there, and is providing a service for those vulnerable, low-income people who need this help.

Again, nothing is free — not legal aid. This idea that somehow these services are free — they are paid for by hard-working, taxpaying Ontarians and we must never forget that. Maybe it sounds a bit like a mantra, but I know that's one of the motives as well, as this government tries to do the right thing at the right time with the right kind of balance.

You can never satisfy all people. As the member for Downsview said, and I think I heard a couple of other members say the same thing: they support the bill, they're going to be vigilant, and who could ask for more? I know the member for Cambridge, who will obviously, if there are to be further committee meetings held on this — although there have been over 200 submissions and a long period of consultation with all the stakeholders, the committee is going to go out once more, I gather. I'd have to let the parliamentary assistant advise me on that. But in that case we'll certainly commit, both in the legislation with amendments and perhaps in the regulatory environment, to know exactly where we go from here.

For a little more technical kind of comment, the corporation is required to monitor and supervise the legal aid services provided by clients, student legal aid services, societies and other entities funded by it. So clearly there's going to be accountability in this as well, which really appeals to me and I'm sure to all members here. It's taxpayers' money and it's services for people. If we waste the money, then we can't provide the services, and there are people who need this service.

People accuse us of being all pro-business. We're just good managers. That's the bottom line.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): Try the emergency rooms.

Mr O'Toole: Mr Kennedy, you're a bank manager, OK? Keep it in mind.

Mr Kennedy: You're the guy we want running emergency rooms.

Mr O'Toole: We call you a commodities dealer, an ambulance chaser. I think you're a fearmonger.

Mr Kennedy: We saw that today, that good management stuff. That was well done. Which one of you is doing the announcing tonight? Come on, you couldn't run anything. You couldn't run a lemonade stand.

Mr O'Toole: The member for York South is saying a number of things that are reckless, as he always does, to scare people. Every time the member for York South is speaking to the very respectful Minister of Health, he is nasty, aggressive, critical. It's very bullying and it's absolutely false. There is no more respectful, dignified minister in this House. I think you should refer to the article in the Star and you would better know the person she is, a caring, compassionate Minister of Health.

This bill very much addresses a fair, balanced delivery of a service for the very vulnerable people in this great, wonderful province. But we're trying to rescue so many pieces that have been ruined over the last 10 years. That's why most of us came here, because it was being lost. Our future and our children's future was being literally frittered away.

The solution to every one of Mr Kennedy's problems is more money. And it's the same for Allan Rock. But when it comes to the very poor, Mr Rock will not help those with hepatitis C. You stand up here tonight and say you'll support those with hepatitis C and I'll sit down and listen to you. All I want you to do, Mr Kennedy, is stand up for the people of Ontario and work together, instead of criticizing our minister.

There isn't enough time really to allow the member for York South or anyone else to comment because there's only 16 seconds left. I apologize to those viewing if I did get off the bill a bit, but we've heard about three hours of debate here on a bill that does three things: It brings in a protective system for the vulnerable that's accountable, with a governance model, and the proper funding.

The Deputy Speaker: It being almost 9:30, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2127.

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Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	Kitchener	Wetlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Cornwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Don Mills	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Durham Centre / -Centre	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Durham East / -Est	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Durham West / -Ouest	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Durham-York	Munro, Julia (PC)	London South / -Sud	Wood, Bob (PC)
Eglinton	Saunderson, William (PC)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	Middlesex	Smith, Bruce (PC)
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Etobicoke-Humber	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children's Issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (enfance)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président		
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)		
Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)		
Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)	Sarnia	Boushy, Dave (PC)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Sault Ste Marie /	
Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)
Nickel Belt	Morin, Blain K. (NDP)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)
	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Norfolk	Galt, Doug (PC)	Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Northumberland	Carr, Gary (PC)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Oakville South / -Sud	Colle, Mike (L)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Oakwood	Caplan, David (L)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Oriole	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Oshawa	Patten, Richard (L)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)		Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa East / -Est	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Sudbury	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Ottawa-Rideau	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Sudbury East / -Est	Ramsay, David (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	Cullen, Alex (L)	Timiskaming	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines, président du Conseil de gestion
Ottawa West / -Ouest	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Victoria-Haliburton	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Oxford	Ruprecht, Tony (L)		Kormos, Peter (ND)
Parkdale	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Waterloo North / -Nord	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Parry Sound	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Welland-Thorold	Doyle, Ed (PC)
	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Wellington	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Perth	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Wentworth East / -Est	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Peterborough		Wentworth North / -Nord	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Port Arthur	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Willowdale	Lessard, Wayne (ND)
Prescott and Russell /			Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Prescott et Russell			Duncan, Dwight (L)
Prince Edward-Lennox-			Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme
South Hastings /			Parker, John L. (PC)
Prince Edward-Lennox-			Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille
Hastings-Sud			Klees, Frank (PC)
Quinte	Fox, Gary (PC)		Sergio, Mario (L)
Rainy River	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)		Kennedy, Gerard (L)
	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique		
	Conway, Sean G. (L)		
Renfrew North / -Nord	Churley, Marilyn (ND)		
Riverdale			
S-D-G & East Grenville /	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	York East / -Est	
S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Bassett, Hon / L'hon Isabel (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York Mills	
	Bradley, James J. (L)		
St Andrew-St Patrick	Froese, Tom (PC)	York-Mackenzie	
	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Yorkview	
St Catharines		York South / -Sud	
St Catharines-Brock			
St George-St David			

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario**
Second Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Deuxième session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 20 October 1998

Mardi 20 octobre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 20 October 1998

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TUITION FEES

Mr David Caplan (Orillia): I rise in the House today on behalf of Ontario's post-secondary students, who have been savaged by the Mike Harris government. Yesterday I visited the University of Western Ontario and met with the medical students there who feel that Ontario's next generation can no longer access medical programs because of the 106% tuition increase this Minister of Education has imposed on them through deregulation of fees. They're concerned about the brain drain Ontario will suffer when we see our new doctors go to the United States to pay their debts.

I also had the opportunity to pick up over 1,500 of these student-debt postcards from Western alone. In just over two weeks, 1,500 students at Western joined our campaign to highlight Mike Harris's neglect of students and student debt.

I demand an answer on behalf of Ontario's students from this Minister of Education.

What does he say to Kate, a social work student who is carrying \$40,000 of debt already and will add another \$12,000 this year? How about Mitchell? Mitchell is a kinesiology student who is \$30,000 in debt. What incentive does he have to work in Ontario? Or John — John's doctoral studies have cost him \$45,000, put him \$45,000 in debt. Dennis, an engineering student, has almost \$50,000 of debt waiting for him when he graduates this year.

Thousands of these cards are coming in from across Ontario. I demand, on behalf of these students, that this government provide some support and relief to the youth of this province.

PINOCHET ARREST

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I rise to welcome the initiative of the Spanish government and the response of the authorities in the United Kingdom in trying to bring the infamous former dictator Augusto Pinochet to justice.

Peculiarities of Chilean law and the niceties of international law must not prevent Pinochet being held accountable for his crimes during his 17-year reign of

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 20 octobre 1998

terror in Chile. Law must not be used to make the world safe for violent dictators who murder and disappear opponents. Law must protect individual and collective democratic rights and freedoms. Law must make the world safe for citizens who dissent, for mothers whose daughters and sons should not be disappeared, for children who should not be orphaned by state terror.

Pinochet must be brought to justice for his crimes against humanity. Viva España, viva democracy, viva Chile.

COMMUNITIES IN BLOOM

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): I rise on behalf of myself and the MPP for Leeds-Grenville, Bob Runciman, to bring attention to the village of Merrickville, located along the historic Rideau Canal in the riding of Leeds-Grenville.

On September 26, at a national awards ceremony held in Winnipeg, the village of Merrickville was declared the most beautiful village of 1,000 people or less in the 1998 Communities in Bloom competition, a program that emphasizes the improvement of quality of life through green spaces and environmental awareness.

This tiny historic village is located on the banks of the Rideau River and still boasts a multiple set of locks from the early 1800s.

Most of the village consists of carefully preserved 19th century buildings — buildings which are highlighted by the colourful flowers planted with pride by local gardeners. The natural river environment is further enhanced by the local bird sanctuary.

Let us not forget the massive ice storm of 1998. The people of this little village represented the true spirit of the Communities in Bloom committee with their positive response to nature's adversity. The entire community worked together repairing and restoring their home, taking inventory of the critical damage and implementing immediate remedies. In fact, the efforts of Merrickville's citizens to clean up was incredible.

HIGHWAY SIGNS

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): My statement is directed to the Minister Of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. Yesterday the minister stood in the house and claimed to be launching a "very special salute" to the men and women who operate and work in small businesses in Ontario. For many small and seasonal business

owners, the minister's salute came as they were receiving the news from his government that highway sign user fees are increasing by some 300%. I must assure the minister that that type of salute they can do without.

The minister claims to be a friend of small business; however, the facts tell a different story. Like most members, I am being inundated with calls from small business and tourist operators who are furious with him and his government. They are furious because they are fed up with the minister's worthless salutes. Small business owners are no longer willing to sit back while the government gives them a so-called salute.

Let me read for the minister from a letter I recently received from a tourist operator, one who voted for your government's so-called revolution. He says:

"I voted for the Conservative government in the last election and have spent a fair amount of time defending their actions. During the past few years, I kept telling myself that the hard line was good for everyone. I can no longer support those views."

This operator, like so many others, is telling me that you have forgotten about them and refuse to acknowledge the contribution that small business makes to Ontario's economy. They ask how any small business owner can take the salutes seriously.

For those who work in the business and tourism sector, it is becoming very clear —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): The Minister of Long-Term Care owes a public apology to the chair, board and staff of the Sudbury Regional Palliative Care Association. Last week the board announced it would have to close its doors if this government doesn't provide more base funding. In response, in a radio interview, the minister made a series of allegations about the organization which were completely incorrect.

He stated that the association only began to talk to his ministry about their funding problems after the decision was made to close the doors. In fact the organization first warned the ministry of the need for more base funding in 1996. On a weekly basis from January to May of this year, the executive director has talked to ministry staff about the funding crisis.

The minister said the board has refused to meet with ministry staff to discuss the details of the operational review which might lead to more funding. In fact it took the ministry from the end of January to the end of September to complete a 22-page review of the organization. The board asked for two to three weeks to review it and respond to ministry staff. They have never refused to meet.

The minister complained that the review has not been shared with the board, staff or public. In fact the organization has a contractual agreement with the ministry not to disclose the details of the review until both parties agree to the contents.

The minister alleged the Sudbury program was being funded in accordance with other northern palliative care programs. In fact, if the Sudbury program is compared to programs with a similar client and volunteer base in southern Ontario, its budget would be significantly increased.

Other allegations were made but the point is this: If the minister doesn't want to increase funding, he should stand up and say so. To use innuendo and allegation as an excuse not to do the right thing is unacceptable.

SCHOOL TEACHERS

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I rise today in the Legislature to make you aware of comments reported in the news media by Canadian Press on October 10 in an article reported in the Toronto Sun. The item which has caused me great consternation was a fairly small item entitled "Sexual Crimes Costing Teachers." In the article the Ontario College of Teachers reported that in disciplinary incidents 75% were sex-related misconduct cases.

What provoked me was not so much the report but rather the comments made by a supposedly professional teacher who is also the vice-president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Mr Jim McQueen.

The comments made to Jeff Harder of the Toronto Sun were a direct quote, "Probably the college will expand its activities beyond, you know, kiddie diddlers and those kinds of things," said federation vice-president Jim McQueen.

I find this type of remark unprofessional, unacceptable, unconscionable, demeaning and derogatory towards the profession of teaching and the very college that was recently established to promote and protect this profession.

I wish to publicly record not only my disgust at this remark but the disgust of many members of this House who also revile such comments by a supposed professional.

1340

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Ted Arnott, the Conservative MPP for Wellington, has written an open letter to the Minister of Education on the important issue of school closures.

I can appreciate the frustration of a Tory MPP who has to resort to writing to letters to the editor in order to get his own government to listen, and I want to help him get his voice heard.

I think Mr Arnott would like to lay the blame for school closures on the local school board, much as the Minister of Education tries to do, but Mr Arnott has some very real problems with the deadline his government has put in place for decision-making. He wants the minister to extend the deadline forcing school closure plans to be put in place, and so it should be.

But if Mr Arnott wants to avoid school closures in his communities, he's going to have to push his government

on another front. His government is refusing to fund any so-called extra space and they are going to force schools to close as a result of that. Mr Arnott is pleased that his board has some overall money, but if he has talked to his board, he will recognize that that money is all committed to the essential areas that the minister has decreed will be funded. School space is not one of those areas.

Mr Arnott makes a compelling case for the value of schools in rural communities. I believe there should be a school in the community, whether it is rural or urban. That's an issue of basic access to education. Mr Arnott's government is not yet prepared to provide the dollars to keep schools in the community, and they should. Just extending the deadline isn't going to be good enough.

JOB CREATION

Mr Blain K. Morin (Nickel Belt): The voters of Nickel Belt made it clear to me during my election campaign that their number one concern is jobs. It's no wonder. The people of Ontario elected the Harris government because it promised to create 725,000 jobs. The people of Nickel Belt want to know where they are.

Your government is working hard to take rights away from workers and to make an income tax scheme for the wealthy. The government claimed the combination of tax scheme and reducing workers' rights would create that employment. Well, it just hasn't worked and now your government is completely out of ideas.

The Conservative government has just announced a jobs tour, going around the province, trying to cover up the Harris government's failure to keep the broken jobs promise.

So is this propaganda show coming to Sudbury? Of course not. In Nickel Belt and Sudbury the unemployment problem has been getting worse since the Conservatives were elected. The unemployment rate has jumped two points since last year and now unemployment is over 11% in the Sudbury area. It's even worse for young workers. Sudbury has lost 2,000 jobs for youths since 1997.

The Ontario Jobs and Investment Board, headed by long-time Conservative staff member David Lindsay is a \$10-million pre-election campaign funded out of the pockets of Ontario's taxpayers —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. The member for Hamilton Mountain.

VISITORS

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): First of all, on behalf of the Honourable David Tsubouchi, I'd like to acknowledge the presence in the visitors' gallery today of the Older Adults in Action seniors' group from Markham.

JOANNE MALAR

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): I'm pleased to take this opportunity today to congratulate a very special young woman, a resident from my community of Hamilton Mountain.

Several weeks ago, Joanne Malar was named Ontario female athlete of the year. Joanne received this honour for her extraordinary list of accomplishments in the sport of swimming during this past year. As a participant in the World Cup circuit, Joanne attended World Cup V in Glasgow, Scotland, World Cup VI in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, World Cup VII in Imperia, Italy, and World Cup VIII in Paris, France. Joanne came away from these competitions with a total of five silver and three bronze medals.

At the world short course championships in Gothenburg, Sweden, Joanne won a bronze medal and at the Pan Pacific championships in Fukuoka, Japan, she earned a silver and three bronze medals. Most recently, Joanne continued the exhibition of her athletic excellence at the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where she won one gold, two silver and two bronze medals.

This outstanding young athlete also finds the time to continue her full-time studies at the University of Calgary where she is majoring in kinesiology.

On behalf of the citizens of Hamilton Mountain, I congratulate Joanne Malar for her extraordinary accomplishments this past year. I, along with all my constituents, join her family, friends and neighbours, high atop Hamilton Mountain, in rooting for her as she attempts to achieve her next goal, that of qualifying for the 2000 summer Olympics in Sydney, Australia. We will all be chanting, "Go, Joanne, go."

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROFESSIONAL FORESTERS ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998 SUR LES FORESTIERS PROFESSIONNELS

Mr Ramsay moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 71, An Act respecting the regulation of the practice of Professional Forestry / Projet de loi 71, Loi concernant la réglementation de l'exercice de la profession de forestier.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): This bill continues the Ontario Professional Foresters Association as the professional body that regulates and governs the profession of professional forestry in Ontario.

PERSONS DAY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As you know, Sunday was Persons Day, and I'm asking for unanimous consent for all-party statements today to celebrate that very important day.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is there unanimous consent for all-party statements for Persons Day? Agreed.

Ms Churley: On Friday of last week, I attended the LEAF annual fundraising breakfast to celebrate Persons Day in this province. Once again it was a very enlightening and a very empowering event for many, many hundreds of women who come out every year to celebrate this very important day in our lives.

It's somewhat hard to believe that there was a day when women were considered to be non-persons; in other words, we had no legal rights. Somebody asked me just very recently what Persons Day was, and I said, "Well, if it weren't for Persons Day, if it weren't for that legal right granted to women, I wouldn't be here today."

Women did not have the right to vote, and in fact had very few rights. So this was a very important judgment that affected the lives of women across our country, and I am very happy today to stand and ask all of the members in the House to celebrate this day with us. We celebrated with LEAF on Friday, and we remembered the legal cases brought forward by LEAF, which were very important to the rights of women in this province, and indeed across the country.

One of the cases, for instance, that LEAF has been working on recently and that we will hear the results of soon was a sexual assault case in Alberta, I believe, where a young woman who three times said no to sexual advances was sexually assaulted. The judge — this was a case that was appealed — said, and I can't quite remember the quote, that she "didn't come exactly dressed in crinolines and a bonnet."

This was a hot summer day where a young woman went for an interview, I believe at some kind of fairgrounds, and was asked to be interviewed in a trailer. This was a very young woman, 17 years old. The young woman, who went into the trailer, was sexually assaulted by this man after she made it very clear that she didn't want those sexual advances. The judge ruled that she in fact, because of the way she was dressed, and I believe because she didn't actively fight back — and she says that's because she saw a TV show explaining to women that if they feel they're in danger they should try to stay calm.

1350

This case has been appealed, and LEAF represented this young woman. We're very much looking forward to a reversal in this decision, because we are seeing more and more the erosion of women's rights. Yesterday my colleague Marion Boyd, our health critic, stood up and talked about the erosion of abortion services. Safe, legal abortions in this province are being eroded by this government. We have to continue to be alert and continue to fight for the rights of women at all times.

I'm very happy today to say that LEAF is there fighting for the rights of women. It's important for all of us to be vigilant to make sure that the hard-earned rights women have fought for over the years are not eroded further.

I thank you for this opportunity, and I look forward to hearing from the other parties today.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Mr Speaker, I understand the minister responsible for women's issues is

going to be arriving. The government House leader has asked if I would take her turn in the rotation while we await her arrival, and I am pleased to do that.

I am pleased that we are going to have an opportunity to recognize, although somewhat belatedly, the fact that Sunday was Persons Day. As the member for the third party just indicated, Persons Day was recognized at the LEAF breakfast, the breakfast that was held in communities across this province on Friday morning.

LEAF, for those who are not aware, is the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund. It is the members of LEAF and the supporters of LEAF who have so strongly and actively argued for the full personhood of women from the time of that original decision. LEAF was not founded then, but it was people with the belief that we have to establish the full personhood of women in the courts in order to ensure that women are enabled to participate fully in every aspect of our society, because surely that's what personhood means.

One of the statements that was made at the LEAF breakfast here in Toronto on Friday was that although there was recognition on that date of women becoming persons in a legal sense, there were still many women who were not given that recognition, particularly women who are part of an ethnic minority.

The other reality that was addressed at the LEAF breakfast was that although there has been progress for women in achieving greater participation in all aspects of our society since women legally became persons, there have also been giant steps, sadly, backwards. There have certainly been steps backwards very recently in the justice system. The member for Riverdale has referred to one that is a current issue of concern for LEAF in the courts. It is almost inconceivable, for those of us who have celebrated some of the progress women have made before the courts, to believe that there could be a justice who had determined that no did not mean no because the young woman who was involved in the incident had not presented herself, to quote the judge, "in crinolines and petticoats." LEAF is taking that case forward in support of the appeal.

LEAF also recognized a number of other areas and I think it is appropriate, as we talk about women achieving full personhood, to recognize those areas in which there have been backward steps here in Ontario. I won't dwell on them at length, but I think they need to be recorded on this day of recognition: the fact that employment equity is no longer a part of the law of Ontario under the current government and that that represents a gigantic step backwards for women who are looking for support to become equal participants in the workforce; the fact that this government removed a significant aspect of the law governing pay equity. They have now been found to be in opposition to the Constitution of the land and have had to reverse that position, but it has still set back the implementation of pay equity significantly, and the payment of funds to agencies that have to implement their pay equity plans are still pending.

Most particularly, we go back to the fact that if they're going to achieve true personhood and true participation in

aspects of our society, they have to have some degree of economic strength and independence.

We know what has happened to women who are in low-income families and sole-support families on social assistance in recent years. We've seen the cutbacks to women who head up families on social assistance. We've seen the cutbacks of 23% in social assistance. We've seen what happens when women try to get out of abusive situations and establish some independence. We've seen the cutbacks of the counselling support for women who are trying to move from an emergency shelter into second-stage housing and become economically independent.

We've seen the difficulty of women in getting legal aid certificates. Last night in this House there was a debate continued on restructuring the legal aid plan, legislation which does nothing but change the governance model, with absolutely no attempt to address the issue of funding and whether there will be any ability for women who are seeking to get legal support in order to get custody orders, so they will have the economic support they need to leave abusive situations, whether they will have any chance of getting that legal support.

We know what's happened to the family support plan. Women who have made the break and are attempting to establish independent lives are not able to get the support which courts have already awarded to them.

We do want to celebrate, to recognize the day on which women became persons, but it becomes somewhat meaningless if this many years later we are unable to continue to take steps forward in ensuring that women are full participants in all aspects of society. I trust that if the minister responsible for women's issues in the government of Ontario rises to recognize women's day, she will give us some personal assurance of the areas in which women will take steps forward rather than backwards in this next year.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): Persons Day in Canada began 66 years ago, on October 18, 1929. That is when women were declared to be persons in the eyes of the law of this country. Prior to that time, only men were considered persons, entitled to societal rights and privileges.

This watershed in women's history was the result of the determination and persistence of Judge Emily Murphy of Alberta and four other committed Canadian women: Henrietta Edwards, Louise McKinney, Nellie McClung and Irene Parlby. Collectively known as the Famous Five, these champions of women's rights took their crusade all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. On behalf of all the women of Ontario, and Ontarians in general, I would like to acknowledge Judge Murphy and her colleagues for their achievement on behalf of all of us who have followed them.

Since the declaration of their personhood, Canadian women have increased their presence in virtually all spheres of endeavour. Taking a page from Judge Murphy's book of creativity and determination, more women than ever before have become successful business people in this country by creating 1.7 million jobs across

this country. Women are the greatest contributors to job creation in Canada. They are the entrepreneurs of our country.

Over the past decade, all governments of all partisan stripes, not only here in Ontario but across Canada, have improved the opportunities for women in education, not only choosing the kinds of courses and subjects they need to get ahead, but this year, in the registration in our universities in this province, they are 53% of what we would refer to as the first-year class. They are more than 50% in our educational classes, our medical classes, our law classes. We have so much to be thankful for.

They are involved in private industry and the operation of their own businesses, but they have not achieved their goal when it comes to representation on boards across this country. We have so much to do to assist women to become those board members where they will be equal decision-makers in areas where decisions are made about investment in our country, about the justice system in our country, about the police services in our country, about education, about health care. More women than ever are pursuing these opportunities.

1400

This is a challenging time for governments across our country. The ministers responsible for women's issues have put at the top of their agenda a framework to stop violence. We in Ontario have our framework, and that framework will be used by ministers across this country as the kind of, I would say, general policy that other provinces will be able to adopt. We will be hoping to make that announcement sometime early in the next year.

I will also say on that note that this is an opportunity for we in Ontario to give credit to our Solicitor General, who has taken the time to expand our victim/witness assistance program so that women will have women volunteers in every community that has a program like this, which has doubled in size in just the last three years and will take on different roles and responsibilities. In fact, I will be talking with the federal justice minister for the country, Anne McLellan, at a police college very shortly. We will be talking about the gains that women will be making in policing and in the justice system across this country.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to talk about women's health. Very shortly we will, I will say to the members of the opposition parties and our own members — women and health. When we take a look at how far we have come and how far we still have to go, we recognize our deficiencies in this country. We know that there has been more research evolving and dedicated to men's health problems than to women's health problems. As a result, we announced the Women's Health Council, of which the membership will be made public very shortly. At that time the Minister of Health wanted to know exactly what kind of health research would be appropriate and fair in this province to support areas of women's health — namely, heart disease — that have not been supported in the past by any government.

Women's College Hospital is a perfect example, where we have changed the role of that institution so that women downtown would have a more appropriate rape crisis treatment centre so that we could get the kind of evidence we need in the courts so that we can get the convictions to take care of the perpetrators in our new domestic violence court.

I think it would be inappropriate for me to move forward on the gains we have made in this province in the last few years, especially in the last years, without acknowledging the contributions of many of the women in this House, of all partisan stripes, towards the policies in the past that we have built on, policies that may have been started by the Liberal government. That's the case, for those of you who haven't been here before. I look to my friend from Thunder Bay, who has been here as long as I have; in fact, a couple of years longer. I look at my friends in the New Democratic Party who have worked on programs for women.

This is a day to celebrate. This is the day to celebrate the gains women have made. The great strength of women is that they do work together. They do have a different style when it comes to making decisions, and I'm very proud to stand in this House today to talk about the gains of former governments and this government when it comes to creating more jobs for women, when it comes to creating more opportunities both in education and in the world of work, when it comes to celebrating the entrepreneurs of our great country, the great contributors to science, especially in the area of health, especially in the area of justice, especially in the area of the Solicitor General and in the area of social services, I say to my colleague.

We should all be proud of the gains we have made and we should all work harder to make things better for women in this country.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. I want to return to this issue which addresses the fact that some six months ago your government committed to addressing some of the problems connected with delays in being admitted to emergency, and hospitals throughout the province turning patients and ambulances away. You have chosen of your own accord to weigh into this, so I thought it only appropriate that I direct the question to you.

That announcement was made over six months ago. You personally today, by means of a photo op, dropped off the first cheque to one of 150 hospital emergency wards. We have no idea when the others are going to be delivered and I have no idea whether you intend to deliver all of those cheques.

My question, Premier, is very simple. You have pointed the finger most inappropriately at bureaucrats. The buck stops with you. Would you stand up now, Premier, and apologize to Ontarians, but especially to patients whose lives have been put at risk as a result of your incompetence in handling this issue?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Let me first of all respond that I've been well on the record over the weekend talking about the process of government being a barrier to getting these funds out quicker than we would have liked to have done.

I want to correct the record of the member. At no time did I blame the bureaucracy, the bureaucrats or any individual of the very hard-working men and women who are in the process of transforming themselves into one of the elite bureaucracies, indeed if not in Canada, I would say beyond; a bureaucracy that, through the business planning process and the direction our government has given them, has now seen I think 20 or 30 different governments from several countries coming to examine just how it is that this miracle transformation is coming about to get better results within the system. So I welcome —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, it's too late. The real you came out on the weekend. We understand that this now is the product of hours and hours of coaching on how to backtrack on this issue. The real you is out. You pointed the finger at the bureaucrats.

Let's go back to the issue of responsibility here. You put out a press release back on April 20: "Government Takes Action to Improve Hospital Emergency Services."

I'm quoting: "...the government will be acting immediately on recommendations put forward in the final report of the Emergency Services Working Group."

Another quote: "Every region of the province will benefit from our immediate action on the task force's recommendations."

Premier, who is going to assume responsibility for this delay? It took 184 days for this first cheque to be delivered. You delivered it yourself only for purposes of politics, not motivated by any genuine interest in health care. Will you stand up now and apologize for this?

1410

Hon Mr Harris: I think I was very clear. I think you're barking up the wrong tree if you're looking for heads to roll. This is all you seem to want to talk about. Instead, what we want to talk about is money to roll.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

I was very clear in saying that there is a process in place to make sure that the money is accounted for and is going to where it should go and that it resolves the problem. The announcement was made in response to the report some six months ago. We made it very clear that we felt that in the short term the problem would next arise this fall, and in the meantime we asked the Ministry of Health to work with the various hospitals and those

involved in emergency room care to work out a plan that could be both accountable and timely.

The Speaker: Answer.

Hon Mr Harris: Clearly, I think we would all agree that there are processes, they are honestly designed to help us do the right thing, but I made a decision they're not to —

The Speaker: Thank you. Premier, come to order, please. Final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you were the guy who was going to get rid of all the red tape. You were going to make government so much more efficient. If you said something was going to happen, it was going to happen, just like that.

On April 20 you said \$225 million was going to flow immediately. Today is October 20. The first of 149 cheques went out the door. When are the others going to go?

Why don't you just stand up here and say you made a mistake? It was a big mistake. You jeopardized the lives of Ontario patients in the doing. Stand up and apologize. Don't point to bureaucrats. Don't point to your Minister of Health. Don't point to the Chair of Management Board. You stand up and you take the blame for this and say you're going to apologize.

Hon Mr Harris: "It's not uncommon for Ottawa's five major hospitals to redirect ambulances to another hospital when they're busy with serious cases such as heart attack victims" — December 24, 1987. The Liberals were in government.

"Dr Garth Dickinson, director of the Ottawa General Hospital emergency department, said there's a risk someone may die because the hospital is turning away critical cases" — Ottawa Citizen, February 15, 1987. The Liberals were in government then.

You just don't get it. Government is about process; it is about dealing with people in the aggregate. We understand that. But sometimes — and in this case, over 15 years — process has gotten in the way of people. We stand here —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

New question; leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, let me tell you what was happening on the other side of the doors while you were getting your picture taken outside Mount Sinai today. According to the director of emergency and the triage nurse, nine people were stuck waiting in the emergency room to get beds. Some had been waiting since Sunday, some since yesterday, and the day's rush hadn't even started.

You showed up with a cheque for some \$600,000. This hospital is running a deficit of \$7 million. These people are waiting because of your health care policies in Ontario. These are your cuts that have led to these people being piled up in emergency wards and led to ambulances not being able to take patients to hospital emergency wards.

Stand up now, Premier. Admit that when it comes to the problems connected with health care in this province, you

are the problem. You are not the solution; your cheque does nothing; you're the problem.

Hon Mr Harris: "An elderly woman turned away from two area hospitals last weekend died Christmas day. The ambulance in which she was riding Sunday was turned away from Queensway Carleton Hospital and the Ottawa Civic because their emergency rooms were full" — Ottawa Citizen, December 26, 1987. The Liberals were in government.

What has happened since then is that money has been thrown into a system and not solved the problem. Today I want to congratulate the Minister of Health, I want to congratulate the Chair of Management Board and I want to congratulate the hospitals involved for truly working on an emergency room plan that in both the short term and the long term will prove to be effective, finally, after 12 years and three governments.

Mr McGuinty: Let's be straight on this issue. You're not the health care guy. You didn't run at the time of the last election saying, "Vote for me and I'll improve health care in Ontario." The least you can do is be honest about that. That's not why you're in government. That's not your shtick. You're the cut guy. So you're the first guy to cut \$800 million —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Minister of Social Services, come to order. Government whip, come to order. Member for Brant-Haldimand, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for York-Mackenzie. You see, I don't know what you're doing, but I heard you heckling.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Yes, I heard you. I'm certain it was you; I'm positive it was you.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I don't want congratulations. I just want you to come to order. Thank you.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you can talk about other governments all you want. You cut \$800 million out of hospital budgets in Ontario. You're not in government because you think health care is a good thing. For you, it's something that gets in the way and costs too much money. Let's be very clear about that. You didn't get into government to advance the cause of health care in Ontario; you got in there because you wanted to make cuts, and that has come at the expense of health care in Ontario.

Let's go back to the original issue. If patient care is such a priority, why did it take six months to cut a cheque? Why did you hang on to \$225 million? Why did you keep it in the drawer after making so much great fanfare about it being spent to help patients?

Hon Mr Harris: First of all, I would suggest that the member should read the Common Sense Revolution. In fact, had you read it earlier you might not be where you're sitting today, particularly if you had understood the problems and how far back your administration, followed by the NDP administration — the 10-year record, the lost decade — set this province. You might have understood just a little bit better.

We're happy to stack our record of now \$18.7 billion of record health care spending, of restructuring health care, of massive new investments into cardiac care, massive new investments into the Ontario drug benefit program, massive new investments into seniors, into long-term care, into restructuring — finally having the courage and the leadership to do what for 10 years two successive premiers and administrations, the Liberal and the NDP, did not have the courage to carry through what every professional in the health care field said needed to be done. We are doing that and more, and it is a better health care system today as a result.

Mr McGuinty: Just so we're very straight about the record here in terms of when these significant delays started occurring in our emergency wards, and these backup problems, let's look to the Emergency Services Working Group's final report, a document you commissioned. Do you know what it happens to say? It says, "The current trend towards increased occurrences began in October 1996, and has risen most steeply in the past few months."

The director of the hospital you visited today said that as to those nine patients who are waiting to find a bed inside the hospital but can't because of the cutbacks you've made to that hospital, that's an occurrence that has happened for the first time in over 10 years. It is your health care policies that are causing these problems. It is your cuts to hospital budgets that are hurting Ontario patients.

1420

You're the problem, you're not the solution, and showing up outside some hospital door today, cheque in hand, for another in a long series of photo ops isn't going to change the minds of Ontarians. The number one issue today in this province is health care. You're the problem, you're not the solution, and a photo op isn't going to change that. Now stand up and apologize for the fact that you hung back on this money for six months.

Hon Mr Harris: I would just like to repeat that you don't seem to get it, about the process of government. You sat there for five years and made no reforms to the process of government. Government is about process; we understand that. Of course there was a period of time from the announcement to make sure that these dollars in fact solved the problem. Of course there were a lot of consultations with those involved in the emergency rooms and the departments in the hospitals across this province. The CEO of Mount Sinai Hospital, which I visited today, while the minister was busy processing cheques for other hospitals —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Clearly we acknowledge that sometimes process gets in the way of people. I acknowledged that, I admitted that, I indicated that on behalf of myself, my office, all of government, this process, but I tell you this: In the 17 years I've been in this Legislature, we are the only party that

has stood against process getting in the way of helping people. The minister is to be congratulated for getting through that process, unlike any other government has in the 17 years I've been here.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. You've become a master at blaming everyone else in the province for your agenda and what your agenda is doing to hospitals. You've cut hospitals to finance your income tax scheme. That's evident to everybody.

You go out there and you tell this story to the media and you leave out of the story that you've already taken \$800 million out of hospitals. You leave out of the story that this year hospitals in Ontario are \$300 million in debt because of your cuts. And you leave out something else. You leave out the fact that it was your colleagues on Management Board who held up this funding to help fix emergency rooms. Premier, do you deny that your cabinet colleagues at Management Board had this proposal before them three times over the last six months and did nothing with it? Do you deny that?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): First of all, let me deal with the preamble of the member's question. It's as the result of our income tax policies that higher-income earners are paying a bigger percentage of our dollars now than under the NDP. It's the result of our income tax changes that lower- and middle-income earners are now paying less. But it's also a result of 408,000 new jobs and more revenue for Ontario. It's very important that you understand that.

The reason you need to understand that is that our revenues are somewhere around \$1.2 billion to \$1.5 billion higher as the result of our tax policies. Health care funding is somewhere around \$1.2 billion to \$1.5 billion higher. It is as the result of our policies that we've been able to fund in excess of \$1 billion of brand new money to fund priority areas in the health care system.

Mr Hampton: The Premier is proud that in an American economic boom he gets more tax revenue at the same time he's taking \$800 million out of hospitals. He's proud of that.

Premier, you studiously avoided answering the question. The question is: Your cabinet colleagues on Management Board had this proposal before them three times. Ernie Eves, Deputy Premier, sits in cabinet, sits on Management Board; Dave Johnson who sits beside you is on Management Board; Chris Hodgson who sits behind you is on Management Board. In the six months that this proposal went to Management Board three times, did you ever think to lean over to one of them and say, "Gee, you know, there's a really serious problem happening in those emergency rooms; people are dying; other people are suffering unnecessarily"? Did you every think to lean over and talk to one of your colleagues and say, "We've got to get that money to those emergency rooms; we've got to do something about people's health care"?

1430

Hon Mr Harris: It's pretty much a matter of record what I said and what I did, but also a matter of record is the extraordinary effort of the Minister of Health and of the Chair of Management Board, not only to ensure — albeit, as we indicated, the process did not work as fast as we wanted it to. We have acknowledged that. It got in the way here and we have publicly acknowledged that, as the member will know. Notwithstanding that, the challenge was not to see how many dollars you could throw out the door as quickly as you could, the way you did, which led us to bankruptcy. The challenge they were wrestling with throughout the summer and working with our partners on was to ensure that these new dollars, on top of the billion or so new dollars we've already flowed to health care, actually went to solve the problem. As you will know, there's a 12- to 15-year record of your administration putting more money in, which did not solve the problem.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you are trying very hard not to answer the question, but the trail doesn't end there.

The reality is that your government announced \$5 million for nurse practitioners. We haven't seen any of that.

You announced \$36 million to attract and retain physicians in underserved areas. We haven't seen any of that.

You announced \$60 million for mental health. We haven't seen that.

You went into Ear Falls and you announced \$300,000 for the Ear Falls clinic. People there have seen \$5,000 after six months.

You announced \$400 million last year for hospital restructuring, and hospitals have only gotten \$154 million of it. The list goes on and on.

You created this problem in the hospitals. You went in and you cut without having services out in the community that would provide people with health care. You created the problem. Your colleagues on Management Board made the problem worse. Admit it, Premier, and while you're at it will you tell us, when are the other hospitals in Ontario going to get the money you promised and that they need to deliver health care?

Hon Mr Harris: Let me correct the record on some of the information you put forward. Ear Falls is now in receipt of \$16,000 a month, exactly the commitment we made. They're very happy, and they too thank the Minister of Health for cutting through the process and getting the money flowing.

Here's the problem. Between 1985 and 1995 the NDP and Liberal governments did this: You closed more than 10,000 hospital beds; under the social contract you stripped \$590 million from the wages of doctors, nurses and health care workers, including those in my favourite unions, CUPE and OPSEU, from all of those workers. You stripped that money out but you made no investments back in.

When you talk about the reduction of nurses — and there has been a reduction of nurses — three quarters of that occurred under your administration. That's where the

majority of the reductions occurred. This comes from the Canadian Institute for Health Information analysis, not us, you see.

The problem is you cut this money out but you did not reinvest. The Minister of Health and the Chair of Management Board and the Minister of Finance and this government have not only —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. New question.

Mr Hampton: Speaker, my next question is also to the Premier and I want to thank you for cutting him off before he goes into another rhetorical flight and makes a whole bunch of other promises that turn out to be completely phony.

PAY EQUITY

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Premier, I want to ask you about a related question. You see, it's not just in health care that you make these phony announcements. Over two years ago you tried to wipe out pay equity and then the court stepped in and said you can't wipe out pay equity, you have to pay the lowest-paid women in the province, and they ordered you to pay. So you made an announcement that you were going to come up with \$140 million in pay equity payments for those women. Guess what, Premier? Just like the hospitals, it's months later and those low-paid women haven't heard from you or your government.

Premier, are you going to throw another tempter tantrum and tell your fellows on Management Board to pay up and to honour the promise you made?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): We are spending more money on pay equity than any government in the history of this province. The Minister of Finance, who also sits on Management Board, has budgeted record amounts of dollars, far in excess of your government. We've also put before the people a plan to do. Unlike the Liberals in Ottawa when it comes to pay equity, who promise one thing and then renege, which they do quite often on a number of issues, unlike their failing and unforgiving and abysmal record on pay equity, along with a lot of their promises, we honoured our commitment to pay equity. We have budgeted and are allocating and working with our partners in flowing far more dollars than did even your government, although I acknowledge this: Your government commitment to pay equity is at least equal to ours, far in excess of the Liberal Party.

Mr Hampton: I don't disagree with you that the federal Liberals in Ottawa talked a good line on pay equity and now they don't want to hear the words.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Hold on. Supplementary, leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: Premier, this is a matter of the courts, the courts reviewing your government's record and finding that you are in breach of the Charter of Rights and the courts ordering your government to pay some of the

lowest-paid women in Ontario \$140 million in pay equity payments.

You made the statement 12 months ago that you were going to honour the court decision, and just like the hospital emergency case, months have gone by and these people, who are some of the lowest-paid people in the province, haven't heard a word from your government. In fact, we are told that the bill has now gone up by a further \$230 million.

Premier, you arranged a photo op today to go to Mount Sinai. What I'm asking you to do is to honour another one of those promises that you made and you haven't paid. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Harris: I at least appreciate that the member acknowledges that we both agree on the Liberal record, an abysmal record on pay equity both in Ottawa and at Queen's Park. Clearly a Liberal is a Liberal is a Liberal.

You're right, we have committed and set aside \$140 million in cash this year for one-time retroactive payments. This was to cover the proxy pay equity costs, as the courts suggested we do. Unlike the Liberals in Ottawa, when the courts suggest something, we do it.

Here was the process challenge, and I think the member is challenging me to see if we can't cut through the process a little quicker. The 1994 survey data did not reflect the changes that employers had undergone, and certainly it was determined by all of the agencies, including those that would be potential recipients of money, that it wasn't right to use the five-year-old data. We do not want people to fall through the cracks.

The Speaker: Answer.

Hon Mr Harris: They know the money is coming. The survey has been circulated. That information is coming into the Ministry of Finance now and we are confident that —

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr Hampton: I understand that the Liberals in Ottawa have a problem with pay equity. I understand that the Liberals here voted against proxy pay equity. I understand all this, but this is about your credibility. You, Premier, have gone across this province and you have made all kinds of announcements about health care. Those announcements have turned out to be phony and empty, and this is just another example.

These are some of the lowest-paid women in the province. The courts have said, under the Charter of Rights and under pay equity law, that your government should have paid them. You can make announcements. You can say, "We budgeted for it." The fact is that just like the hospitals, these lowest-paid women haven't received the money they are legally entitled to.

Premier, we know you have no problem finding \$6 billion to finance your income tax scheme —

The Speaker: Question.

Mr Hampton: — but why is it that when it comes to people's health care, when it comes to the lowest-paid women in the province, you stall, you stall, you stall? What's it going to take to get the money to the hospitals —

The Speaker: Premier.

1440

Hon Mr Harris: Let me say that I appreciate the member's question and his concern; it is unparalleled and undaunted in support of women across this province. I accept the question in that context. I invite the member to work with us. I'm told we are still awaiting from some agencies verification of exactly whom the funding is to go to. If the member and some of his colleagues — who have demonstrated a consistent and substantial commitment to pay equity and to paying women particularly equitably, because these are some of the lower-income women who are awaiting this — can assist us in getting through the process here with the agencies in identifying those who should get the money, we would be very appreciative of that help and assistance.

I would say this: The member also talked about the income tax cuts. Those tax cuts benefited —

The Speaker: New question.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier. It has to do with Ipperwash and the shooting death of a First Nations person and the conviction of an OPP officer and criminal negligence. It has been three years now, and we've been pushing for an inquiry. Our worst fears are coming true, and that is that key records essential to Ipperwash are being systematically erased. That is a serious problem.

I will give you one specific which we found out about only a few weeks ago. The key person who was the liaison between your interministerial group and the police command post left the ministry on April 19, 1996. As soon as he left, his files were erased, and 30 days later the backup files were erased. Key documents required for an inquiry into Ipperwash are being systematically erased.

Premier, will you at least agree to this: that you will send all your cabinet ministers and your ministries that are affected by Ipperwash an instruction that all Ipperwash files that have not been destroyed be retained for the foreseeable future?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Yes.

Mr Phillips: I appreciate that. I'll follow up on the specific files that went missing and ask you how it could possibly happen. I'll just say to you that the individual who was involved in this, a well-regarded OPP officer, left the ministry on April 19, 1996. Immediately after that, these key files were erased. The Solicitor General said this about those files:

"Indeed we are concerned about the loss of these files in terms of our ability to retain very important and critical files. I share your concern with respect to that. The current deputy has initiated a review of this situation and a review of the retention policy."

My question to you, Premier, is this: Nothing could be perhaps higher profile than your involvement in Ipperwash, the first death of a First Nations person in a dispute with the government at least in the last 100 years. Yet a mere few months after it happened, right in the Ministry of

the Solicitor General, key files were allowed to be erased. Prior to that, had you made any instructions to ensure that those files would be retained so we could have a fair and obviously unbiased inquiry into this sorry Ipperwash affair?

Hon Mr Harris: I'll refer this to the Solicitor General.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): With respect to the inquiry — and the member raised this earlier — the hard copies of the significant e-mails were printed by the former employee referenced by the member in the deputy minister's office, as was his professional practice. Those copies remain in the possession of the ministry. As a result of the FOI request, the privacy commissioner was satisfied with the employee's explanation of the manner in which he managed his paper and electronic record. This order recited parts of an affidavit of this employee, who had a practice of printing significant e-mails and deleting unimportant ones. The e-mail account was closed by staff in accordance with normal office operating procedure, and this practice is consistent across government and predates the term of this administration.

The privacy commissioner was satisfied with the manner in which these records were managed, and the ministry remains in possession of all documents and has released all responsive records to the privacy commissioner, consistent with the act.

In conclusion, the government has complied with the —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question, third party.

ABORTION

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I again have a question for the minister responsible for women's issues. Minister, you have refused to speak in this House about the issue that was raised yesterday and you have refused to advocate on behalf of women whose access to safe, legal abortions has been jeopardized by your government.

First, your government decided there would be no funding for new stand-alone clinics despite the fact that the existing clinics in the province are bursting at the seams trying to meet women's urgent, time-sensitive demands. Then your government allowed the restructuring commission to close hospitals which performed abortion services without providing additional funds to other providers. As a result, there's been a loss of services to women who seek them. Now you've agreed to take away the automatic exemption for abortion services, as well as labour and delivery services, to physicians and specialists who exceed their billing cap. You have not guaranteed that abortion is among the services designated, and I quote, "as underserved domains of practice," which qualify for exemption.

Yesterday, you refused to speak to this issue, an important concern for women across the province.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question.

Mrs Boyd: Will you stand up today as minister responsible for women's issues and guarantee women that their legal right to an abortion will be respected in Ontario?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): I know the reason for the question by the member, and I think it would be appropriate if I refer this to the Minister of Health.

The Speaker: You know what? You can't tell me what your knowledge is of the question and then refer it. You just refer a question or you don't refer it.

Interjection.

The Speaker: No, you're talking to me about you know the reason. Minister, I'm not debating this. I'll just warn you this time. You can refer it, but please in future just refer it.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I'll answer the question if you think that would be appropriate.

The Speaker: OK, fine. Minister, go ahead.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: In response, I'm not sure whether I understood you, but I'm not unhappy about answering the question.

We have not in fact refused to provide abortion services in this province.

I know the member very well, and she has been concerned about this issue, as I have. She has some concerns about the agreement that was struck with the Ontario Medical Association with regard to fee structures. She has some concerns about availability of abortions because of aging physicians who are refusing to perform abortions. We all heard in the media last night that there are some physicians who, for their own safety, will not be performing abortions in the month of November.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Don't you share those concerns?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: We're all concerned, men and women, in this House. This is not just a women's issue; it's a family issue. It's an issue that affects all families.

I think the specific question had to do with the fee structure, therefore deterring certain physicians. I think the Minister of Health is better able to respond to that than I am and I will refer —

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mrs Boyd: No, Minister. The question was about how you are performing your responsibilities as the minister. That's what it's about. We have not heard one word from you in terms of the cancellation of any funding for new stand-alone clinics. We haven't heard one word from you about the problems that women face who would have accessed services at hospitals that are now being closed. We haven't heard one word from you about the fact that although the minister stood here and said money would be available for this, none of it has been flowed. In fact, we have news from hospitals that say no, they haven't seen any money. One hospital, the Etobicoke General Hospital, tells us that yesterday they were told that next week they may get some money.

We're asking what you are doing on behalf of women who are finding that their access, their time-sensitive access, to abortions is being blocked by your government's policies.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Mr Speaker, I think that is more appropriately referred to the Minister of Health.

The Speaker: Minister of Health.

1450

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health): This was an issue that was raised yesterday. I indicated at that time that we had accepted the recommendations regarding the reimbursement of specialist services. I also indicated yesterday that specialist services will continue to be available to those who need them. We have a specialist retention initiative which allows specialists to apply for exemption from the threshold.

DAIRY INDUSTRY

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. As you know, my riding of Oxford has the largest number of dairy producers in Ontario. In fact, Woodstock is known as the dairy capital of Canada. But my dairy farmers are concerned that other countries are trying to undermine Canada's dairy system. As I speak, I understand that the United States and New Zealand are trying to convince the World Trade Organization panel in Geneva to open up Canada's dairy market. Can you update the House on the status of the WTO talks in Geneva?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank my colleague from Oxford for that question. Yes, indeed, both the US and New Zealand have challenged Canada and its milk pricing methods. They're trying to call that an export subsidy.

It's not the first time that Canada has been challenged. My colleague from Oxford knows that I have had the opportunity of visiting dairy farms in his riding, as I have throughout eastern Ontario. As someone who knows the dairy industry, I can assure my colleague and all members of this House that Ontario's interests are being represented in Geneva as we speak by staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, along with staff from economic development and trade.

From time to time we have our differences with the federal government, but I can tell you that on this one we're very much working together as we negotiate at the WTO. We very much support the dairy industry and supply management.

Mr Hardeman: Thank you very much, Minister, for the update. Can you tell the House and the dairy farmers in my riding what will happen once the hearings wrap up today?

Interjections.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I hope the opposition doesn't take this too lightly, because it's very important. Meetings are terminating today in Geneva, and the WTO process is not a simple one. They will be reconvening in November, and a report will be coming forth sometime in February or March of 1999. Again, the government of Ontario is working very closely with the government of Canada to

make sure that we protect the dairy industry as we've known it.

The dairy industry is one of the largest food sectors in Canada and indeed in Ontario. I am proud to tell you that we are in Geneva with the government of Canada to support the dairy industry.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a question for the Premier. Today in the gallery we have the Laporte family: Mr Roger Laporte and his wife. They're from Cumberland, Ontario. Tragically, last year they lost their son Michel as the result of a motorist who ran a red light. That motorist who ran the red light got off with a \$500 fine, is still driving, and even had a record of running red lights and running stop signs for many years.

In an open letter to you, Mr Premier, Mr Roger Laporte has asked you for help in making red light cameras pass through legislation as soon as possible in order to save other lives. On behalf of Mr Laporte and the Laporte family, who are here, I ask you to make a commitment today that your government will stop obstructing the legislation to allow red light cameras in this province, that you as Premier will listen to Mr Laporte and his family and support the installation of red light cameras throughout this province.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Certainly we extend our condolences to the Laporte family and applaud them for, in their grief and in their sorrow, advancing a cause to try and ensure that no other father or mother or son or grandparent shares or goes through that grief.

We have done a number of things, as you know. We have substantially increased fines. We have brought in community zone legislation. We've announced a community safety package. We have been working with a number of police forces who have called upon us.

There are mixed reviews on one type of red light camera. I think it was the Australian study that said accidents actually went up about 71%, rear-end collisions in particular.

Mr Colle: That's not true.

Hon Mr Harris: There has been no dispute on the new technology of cameras that target the driver and affect points in those areas. The minister, who is not here today, has worked hard to see if we can't clear the way to get these new advanced cameras in place here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Oakwood, you can't accuse another member of not telling the truth. I would ask you to withdraw.

Mr Colle: I withdraw.

The Speaker: Thank you. The member for Prescott-Russell, supplementary.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): The person responsible for running the red light and killing Michel Laporte had previously been stopped twice for the same infraction, running a red light. These are only the times he was caught. A few days prior to the fatal accident, he was pulled over. The policeman gave him a warn-

ing. Why? Probably because the officer knew that it would be his word against the driver's and that without witnesses there would be no other possible evidence to support the charge. In our justice system, those accused have the benefit of the doubt. When are victims going to have the necessary tools to protect their rights?

Premier, every week someone is killed by a red light runner. If your government refuses to support Bill 20, God forbid that one day you will be faced with a situation where a parent, a child, a loved one or a friend will have wished that you had done so.

Would you tell this House today that you and your government will support the red light camera?

Hon Mr Harris: Yes, of course, we do support red light cameras and technology. We support the technology that would deal with the very problem that you've raised, because the old technology would do nothing to charge that driver. What we need is technology that will charge the driver, will cause points, will affect insurance, will be a deterrent, in addition to all the substantial improvements and deterrents and fines that we've brought on.

If I could quote, when we were talking about photo radar, one of the honourable members said, "The other concern I have about this legislation is that the electronic monitoring and photo radar are aimed at the vehicle as opposed to the driver.... I think it takes it a step away, makes it less effective and is unfair when the ticket comes to the person who is the owner of the vehicle." That was Jim Bradley, MPP for St Catharines. We agree.

We agree as well on the red light technology, and that's why we're excited about the new technology and we would ask you to work with us and the minister to ensure that we can get it in place.

1500

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) : Ma question est au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines.

Vous savez que la semaine passée au comité, votre assistant parlementaire nous a indiqué que la politique que votre gouvernement va suivre, une fois que vous transférez des services de la province aux nouvelles régions créées sous la Loi 12, c'est que vous allez respecter les droits des francophones. Il nous a dit que si un service est maintenant protégé par la province dans une région désignée, une fois qu'on le transfère à travers la Loi 12, il va rester et demeurer désigné sous la Loi 8 et on va avoir nos services en français.

Êtes-vous capable de vous énoncer sur ce sujet et nous clarifier que oui, ça va être la politique de votre gouvernement?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I think everyone knows that this government shares his concern and appreciates the importance of ensuring that francophone rights are protected in Ontario. The ability of francophone residents to receive services in

the language of their choice is very important to us, as I know it is to the member opposite.

Each ministry is addressing the needs of the francophone community as details of devolving services are finalized. For example, the continuation of French-language services under the Provincial Offences Act is being addressed through the memorandum of understanding that must be agreed to before a municipality takes on that responsibility.

Similarly, it is our intention to provide for the continuation of bilingual services in appropriate instances through the order establishing each area services board. French-language services would be covered through a minister's order as services are considered on a program-by-program basis in accordance with provincial policy.

M. Bisson : Encore au même ministre, je veux être sûr de ce que vous nous dites aujourd'hui dans l'Assemblée. Vous nous dites que si un service est maintenant donné par la province et que c'est dans une région désignée, vous allez vous assurer, programme par programme, que ce service va demeurer désigné et protégé, que les francophones vont avoir les garanties nécessaires d'aller rechercher les services dans leur municipalité désignée sous la Loi 8 ? Pouvez-vous nous donner cette clarification, s'il vous plaît.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I know the member has worked with the committee at the House level on this and with my parliamentary assistant, and I'd be glad to work with him after the House or in the near future to get letters to clarify it. Area services boards, as he is well aware, are complicated. It's a way to deliver service that was asked for by northern municipalities in varying regions, from Fort Frances and Rainy River right through to the Cochrane-Timmins area that the member represents, and the programs could vary substantially. What we're undertaking to do is work program by program and make sure that provincial policy is adhered to and that French services are delivered in accordance with provincial policy.

CURRICULUM

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. In my constituency of Lambton I've been approached by many members of the community, including students and — the opposition might be surprised — also teachers with regard to the benefits of the new province-wide curriculum at the elementary level. Could you inform me, along with all my colleagues in this House, what this government has done to improve the quality of education?

Hon David Johnson (Minister of Education and Training): I would be happy to do that, because this is a most important question. As the member for Lambton and all the members of this House will know, parents for many years have been saying that we need a challenging and clear and more rigorous curriculum because previous governments have let the curriculum slip.

This government has recognized that the curriculum is central to a quality education program. We started with the kindergarten program and introduced a new program, the first in 50 years. In grades 1 to 8, the curriculum in math and language at the elementary level stressing the basics was introduced over one year ago. More recently, science and technology, the first science curriculum in many years; the first technology program ever in many grades has been introduced.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: The key part of this is that there are expectations year by year so that teachers and parents and students know exactly —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Beaubien: I find it somewhat difficult to believe that the opposition has difficulty swallowing good news, especially when we're talking about quality education. Minister, could you tell me what your ministry is doing to ensure that our teachers have the necessary training to teach the new curriculum?

Hon David Johnson: This is good news. I will say that the first thing we did was we started with teachers and we had teams of teachers developing the curriculum. That was the basic start. What we have done since that point is to set up teams to train the trainers. These are ministry teams that will be training the trainers from each board across Ontario.

Next we developed the electronic curriculum planner, which helps the teachers and helps the principals. Next we developed a video entitled Implementing Ontario's Curriculum, which again is to assist teachers and principals.

All of these initiatives are to ensure that the new curriculum is implemented. I'm proud to say that with this initiative, the teachers across the province of Ontario have begun to implement the highest quality curriculum ever in the history of Ontario.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): My question is to the Premier. Premier, you know that your government has made a mess of the property tax system. Six different property tax bills have been before this House. Municipalities have not been able to set their budgets until September of this year. The appeals system for the property tax system is not yet in place.

Your Deputy Premier at the AMO conference in August stated that he would have a bill before this House as soon as we got back so that the property taxpayers who want to appeal their high assessments could do so before October 30.

Yesterday you're reported to have said, "We've gone over the heads of municipal authorities on a number of occasions to say, 'You're not going to drive our small business people out of business,' and I'm serving notice that I'll do it again if I have to."

Are you going to call the property tax bill? There's nothing on the House schedule for Wednesday and

Thursday, as far as we're concerned, as far as we know. Are you going to do that or are you going to tell us, what are your plans to help those businesses that you are literally putting out of business because of the high property tax level in this province? These people have not had a chance to appeal their assessment. What are you going to do?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'm going to refer it to the Minister of Finance.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): First of all, the bill before the House now could be passed in three and a half seconds. There is no need for two more days' debate. You've already used up one day's debate.

The appeal date, the end of October, was exactly what your critic asked for, exactly what their critic asked for. Then, when you got what you asked for, "Oh, maybe we'll change it." You're playing politics with it. You've had the day of debate on the bill. We'll be glad to call it when you'll pass it second and third on the nod. You don't need any further debate; you've had it. Pass it. If you agree with it, you can pass it. We gave you what you wanted. I know you find taking yes for an answer very tough.

Second, we are not increasing any small business person's taxes, and I can tell you we will not permit that to happen. If need be, we will pass legislation to make sure it doesn't happen.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd seek unanimous consent to ask the minister a supplementary question.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Unanimous consent to ask a supplementary question? There were a couple of noes on that one.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I request consent to revert to motions.

The Speaker: Consent to revert to motions? Agreed.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Mr Speaker, I request unanimous consent to move a motion without notice with respect to evening sittings.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I move that notwithstanding the order of the House dated October 19, 1998, the House shall not sit on the evening of Wednesday, October 21, 1998.

The Speaker: Mr Hodgson moves that notwithstanding the order of the House dated October 19, 1998, the House shall not sit on the evening of Wednesday, October 21, 1998. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1510

PETITIONS

ALZHEIMER DISEASE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition signed by hundreds of constituents of mine relating to the lack of this government's policy and strategy in terms of the Alzheimer strategy, which is very much needed.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We are writing in support of government action on behalf of people with Alzheimer disease and their caregivers and to remind you of issues that are of concern.

We are also deeply disappointed at the lack of a timely response by your government. These same issues were brought to your attention prior to the June 1995 election through the Alzheimer Association of Ontario. On May 26, 1995, the Alzheimer Association of Ontario received a letter from Mike Harris, along with a response to those issues from his policy inquiry team. We want to know what your party has done to fulfill those promises contained in the document that states:

"A Harris government will: develop a province-wide strategy on Alzheimer disease; initiate province-wide consultations; enhance Alzheimer research; institute special supports for caregivers; create a partnership between yourself and the AAO; conduct a public education campaign to raise awareness of Alzheimer disease; ensure adequate community supports are in place to meet the needs of persons with Alzheimer disease and their caregivers."

"Therefore, at the Alzheimer Society, we provide greatly needed help to people with Alzheimer disease and their loved ones. We need funds redirected to our community-based side of the system and an Alzheimer strategy to provide help for today and hope for tomorrow."

These are signed by hundreds of constituents who are concerned. I am very proud and pleased to add my name to that petition.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have further petitions from the citizens of Hamilton and Hamilton-Wentworth outraged by the Harris property tax increases.

"Whereas the Harris government's 'downloading' to municipal taxpayers is directly responsible for the \$36.3-million shortfall to the region of Hamilton-Wentworth; and

"Whereas the Harris government 'downloading' is directly responsible for creating a property tax crisis in our region; and

"Whereas the Harris government, while boasting about its 30% tax cut which benefits mainly the wealthy, is making hard-working families, seniors, homeowners and

businesses pay the price with outrageous property tax hikes and user fees for services; and

"Whereas city and regional councillors are being unfairly blamed and forced to explain these huge tax hikes, Hamiltonians know that what's really going on is that they are being forced to pay huge property tax increases to fund Harris's 30% tax giveaway to the rich; and

"Whereas homeowners, including seniors and low-income families, are facing huge property tax increases ranging from several hundred to thousands of dollars; and

"Whereas the Harris government 'downloading' has led to huge property tax increases for business that will force many small and medium-sized businesses in Hamilton-Wentworth to close or leave the community, putting people out of work; and

"Whereas Hamilton-Wentworth region is proposing that the Harris government share in the costs of an expanded rebate program, worth about \$3 million region-wide;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Harris government immediately eliminate the \$38-million downloading shortfall that is devastating and angering homeowners as well as killing business in Hamilton-Wentworth."

I proudly add my name to those of these local petitioners.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I have a petition with 198 signatures on it.

"Whereas the population of rural Ontario is unique in that it is spread out over a wide geographic area; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Education and Training's funding formula as outlined in the 'student-focused funding pupil accommodation grant' uses the same benchmarks for all of Ontario, urban and rural; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Education and Training's 'small schools grant' and 'remote and rural boards grant' do not provide adequate additional funds for rural boards to offer quality education to our children in rural Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That amendments be made to current Ministry of Education and Training funding formulas to provide district school boards with additional funds that reflect the realities of providing quality education to the children of rural Ontario."

WATER QUALITY

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we petition the Minister of the Environment to supply the people of Ontario with a laboratory result concerning the existence or lack of PCBs and lead in our drinking water;

"Whereas we petition the Minister of the Environment to supply the people of Ontario with a laboratory result

which contains the actual results of any contaminant in our drinking water;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows."

Some 87 signatures are contained within this.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph): Today I present to the Legislature a petition from 88 residents in my community. It concerns the introduction of proportional correction in the Ontario Election Act and reads as follows:

"We respectfully request that the Ontario Election Act be modified so that the residual votes in each constituency (ie the votes not used to elect the winner of that constituency) be accumulated with the residual votes in all other constituencies and used to elect an additional 26 MPPs. They would be selected from published party lists, in proportion to the total number of residual votes for each political party."

Again, on behalf of 88 members, I respectfully submit this to the Legislature.

ALZHEIMER DISEASE

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have a petition directed to the attention of the Minister of Health. It reads:

"In support of government action on behalf of people with Alzheimer disease and their caregivers, and to remind you of issues that are of concern.

"I'm also deeply disappointed at the lack of a timely response by our government. These same issues were brought to your attention prior to the June 1995 election through the Alzheimer Association of Ontario, the AAO. On May 26, 1995, the AAO received a letter from Mike Harris, along with a response to those issues from his policy inquiry team. We want to know what your party has done to fulfill those promises contained in the document, that states:

"A Harris government will develop a province-wide strategy for Alzheimer disease; initiate province-wide consultations; enhance Alzheimer research; institute special supports for caregivers; create a partnership between yourself and the AAO; conduct a public education campaign to raise awareness of Alzheimer disease; ensure adequate community supports are in place to meet the needs of persons with AD and their caregivers."

"At the Alzheimer Society, we provide greatly needed help to people with AD and their loved ones. We need funds redirected towards our community-based side of the system and an Alzheimer strategy to provide help for today and hope for tomorrow."

It is signed by hundreds of people in Thunder Bay.

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): "To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas many Ontarians have been infected with the hepatitis C virus as a result of transfusions using contaminated blood; and

"Whereas the current compensation package only provides funding for those people infected between the years 1986 and 1990; and

"Whereas in Canada there are at least 20,000 surviving victims who were infected with hepatitis C before 1986, who placed their faith in the blood system and are now suffering;

"Now therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario on behalf of the victims and their families, in support of the Ontario government's call for a compensation package for Ontarians who were infected with the hepatitis C virus through the blood system prior to 1986, and that pending a resolution of the federal liability for the contaminated blood problem, Ontario agree in the interim that such new package be funded by the Ontario and federal government on the same basis as the federal-provincial agreement covering 1986-90. We call on the government of Canada to do the right thing."

I affix my signature.

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My petition reads as follows:

"Whereas prostate cancer is the fourth-leading cause of fatal cancer in Ontario;

"Whereas prostate cancer is the second-leading cause of fatal cancer for males;

"Whereas early detection is one of the best tools for being victorious in our battle against cancer; and

"Whereas the early detection blood test known as PSA, prostate-specific antigen, is one of the most effective tests at diagnosing early prostate cancer;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to encourage the Minister of Health to have this test added to the list of services covered by OHIP and that this be done immediately in order for us to save lives and to beat prostate cancer."

I add my signature, as I'm in complete agreement with this petition.

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I continue to receive and present petitions on behalf of Hamiltonians who are trying to save the Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital.

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned citizens of Hamilton and the surrounding communities, beg leave to petition the government of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission has announced the closure of Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Health Services Restructuring Commission, is divesting its responsibility for mental health care without hearing from the community first; and

"Whereas community-based mental health care providers will bear the brunt of this ill-fated decision by being forced to meet what is sure to be an increased demand for their services; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is not adequately monitoring community-based mental health services for their effectiveness, efficiency or whether they're even delivering the agreed-upon programs in the first place, according to the 1997 annual report of the Provincial Auditor; and

"Whereas the community pays the price for cuts to mental health care;

"Therefore we, the citizens of Hamilton and area who care about quality, accessibility and publicly accountable mental health care for all Ontarians, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately set aside all recommendations to divest and/or close Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital and the programs and services it provides; and

"Further, to call for full hearings to seek community solutions to community issues and to democratically decide the future of mental health care for the citizens of Hamilton and area."

Again, I continue to support the petitioners from my hometown.

1520

PERSONAL WATERCRAFT

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): "To the Parliament of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of the province of Ontario, draw the attention of the Parliament to the following:

"That we are very much concerned about the excessive personal watercraft — speed, danger, noise and more on our shores of Red Bay.

"It is unacceptable to stand high-speed chasing for hours, particularly in areas where people wish to swim.

"It is unacceptable that residents, property owners, guests and tourists have to take refuge indoors, closing their doors and windows due to the noise and gas smell, swimmers and children have to return to shore to avoid accidents, wildlife have to flee, if they can; the impact on fish and bird habitats must be tremendous; birds are chased and harassed; fishing boats have to stop fishing after being surrounded or chased etc.

"Accidents are unavoidable if this situation is not brought under control. Swimmers fear for their safety. At present, only a 100-foot protection zone with a 10-kilometre per hour speed limit exists. This may be sufficient for most boaters but it is by far not enough for the Jet Skis or personal watercraft which can and do manoeuvre in very shallow waters at high speeds. This is especially dangerous for shallow-water beaches such as

Red Bay where children and swimmers are used to being safe up to over 400 feet where it is still possible to stand. It is urgent to extend the 100-foot zone in order to avoid accidents. In the United States, restriction zones of two miles exist in some areas, while jet drives are prohibited in other areas.

"As we do not have any further laws in this regard, we ask for a noise bylaw which would restrict the noise output of all recreational boats in order to protect human beings and wildlife from excessive noise levels. We ask for restriction in noise and speed within two miles of the shoreline. If certain legislative measures were taken, accidents, arguments and devaluation of waterfront property would be reduced or prevented. It is imperative to pass legislation before severe accidents or deaths result.

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon Parliament to enact legislation against excessive Jet Ski or personal watercraft — noise, speed and danger. We do not object to personal watercraft but the unsafe and disruptive use of them."

I affix my name to the top.

DENTAL CARE

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads like this:

"Whereas a new schedule of dental services for children and people with disabilities was introduced by the government under the Ontario Works Act and the Ontario Disability Support Program Act; and

"Whereas the new schedule fails to meet the special needs of children and people with disabilities, reduces services, places barriers to accessing care and creates an environment for various different dental programs across Ontario; and

"Whereas the move away from an emphasis on prevention under the new dental schedule brings significant health risks for children and people with disabilities who are often least able to practise good oral hygiene; and

"Whereas the new dental schedule interferes with the patients' rights to consent to treatment by requiring administrators, and not patients or substitute decision-makers, to authorize and deny dental treatment; and

"Whereas there is no method for the patient to appeal a decision by a plan administrator to deny dental treatment; and

"Whereas pre-authorizations, called predeterminations in the new plan, will require that a higher level of confidential patient health information be disclosed to dental plan administrators; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has caused confusion among patients by introducing the plan without adequate consultation and has not included any affected patient groups in consultations after releasing the new dental plan;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Delay full implementation of the new dental plan until the requirement for predeterminations is removed, patient confidentiality is protected, the plan emphasizes prevention in oral health care, and the government consults directly with affected patients to ensure the new plan will meet the special needs of children and people with disabilities."

I affix my signature to this very able petition.

OPPOSITION DAY

TAXATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Whereas the tax scheme instituted by the Harris Conservatives provides real benefits only to individuals with the highest incomes, while forcing cuts to health care, schools, environmental protection and other vital services; and

Whereas 25% of the money from the tax scheme goes to the top 6% of individual taxpayers in Ontario; and

Whereas rebuilding public services will only be possible when this tax scheme for the wealthy is repealed;

Therefore this House urges an immediate reinvestment in health care, education, environmental protection and other services in our communities, financed by reversing the tax scheme for the top 6% of individual taxpayers.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Mr Hampton has moved opposition day motion number 2. Mr Hampton.

Mr Hampton: The defining issue in Ontario today is where you stand on giving billions of dollars to high-income individuals in an income tax scheme while taking that money away from health care, education, environmental protection and other community services that are important to all of us and that are crucial, absolutely crucial, for sustaining and building the Ontario we treasure.

The income tax scheme put in place by the Harris Conservatives, now that it is fully phased in, will take \$6 billion a year to pay for. The question we have to ask is, does everyone benefit equally from that \$6-billion-a-year income tax scheme? The answer is, not a chance. The top 6%, the 6% who are at the very top of the income and wealth ladder, individuals with taxable income over \$80,000 a year, get 25% of the \$6-billion-a-year income tax scheme. In other words, more than \$1.5 billion are being taken out of health care and education and funnelled into the pockets of people who are already very well off in this province.

Speaker, I want you to know and I want everyone in Ontario to know that New Democrats believe that is wrong. It's wrong to cut health care, education, environmental protection and vital community services to put more money in the pockets of people who are already well off. It's not a case of a little too far a little too fast, as Liberals would say. It's wrong.

People in modest- and middle-income families know perfectly well that they aren't benefiting from this income tax scheme and that they're not going to benefit from this income tax scheme, because whatever little benefit they are supposed to get out of this income tax scheme is more than overwhelmed by dramatically higher tuition fees, is more than overwhelmed by new health care user fees, is more than overwhelmed by property taxes that have gone up and are going to go up and up and up, is more than overwhelmed by new copayment fees, new user fees, new administrative fees, and is more than overwhelmed by the incredible cuts to health care and to education, which all of us depend on.

Middle- and modest-income families across Ontario know that when they add up all the new user fees, the new higher tuition fees, the soaring property taxes, the unchecked pollution in our province, the closing of schools and over-crowded emergency rooms, they are losing from this income tax scheme, they are paying for this income tax scheme in dozens and dozens of ways, all to benefit the 6% at the top of the income and wealth ladder.

Not only that, but the real risk down the road is that this income tax scheme will be institutionalized, will be cemented in place, and that will mean continuing cuts to health care, continuing cuts to education, continuing cuts to the community services we all need to finance this income tax scheme on a year-over-year basis.

1530

I want to say something to my Liberal colleagues, because I think it's here they have to answer for something. Liberals, we have seen in this Legislature, will stand and criticize the income tax scheme. They criticize the income tax scheme and they acknowledge that money is being taken out of health care to pay for it, they acknowledge that money is being taken out of education to pay for it, they know that money is being taken out of environmental protection to pay for it, yet they say that if they become the next government of Ontario, they will institutionalize this income tax scheme, they will cement it in place. They will cement in place an income tax scheme that will day in, day out, year in, year out continue to drain money from education, from health care, from environmental protection and from the community services we all need.

I believe Liberals have to come clean on this issue. They have to say to people very directly, do they believe in health care, will they reinvest in health care, will they reinvest in education, or are they going to cement in place an income tax scheme that is going to continue to bleed health care, continue to bleed education, continue to bleed environmental protection? We need a straight answer.

For us as New Democrats the priority is clear. We need to begin reversing this income tax scheme for the 6% at the top of the income and wealth ladder. That would give us more than \$1.5 billion to put back into education, back into health care, back into environmental protection, where it will do the most good for the most people.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Aren't they cutting taxes in BC right now?

The Acting Speaker: Member for St Catharines, come to order.

Mr Hampton: I note that the Liberal member here is having a bit of discomfort. I can understand why he would have a bit of discomfort, because I know Mr Bradley is one of the more progressive Liberals and he's probably having a difficult time understanding the position his own party is taking.

Mr Bradley: I'm really against that back-to-work legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Hampton: The Harris Conservatives will promise to keep going with their income tax scheme and with other tax schemes no matter what the damage. We know that. We know that this government over here is not in the tradition of Bill Davis, is not in the tradition of John Robarts. They are not progressive Conservatives. We know this group over here has more in common with Newt Gingrich and some of the right-wing Republicans in the United States or Preston Manning and the Reform Party, who get most of their ideas from the United States. We understand that.

We understand that this outfit over here will continue to undermine public health care, continue to undermine public education, continue to undermine environmental protection because their view of the world is simply this: Most services should be privatized. Their view of the world is that those who have money can afford to buy decent health care; those who have money can afford to buy a decent education; and those who have money can go live in a secluded suburb somewhere, where they don't have to worry about the polluted air. This is a government that believes if you have money, everything's going to be OK. If you don't have money, you don't matter anyway to this government; just get out of the way. That's becoming quite evident.

New Democrats don't believe in that world. In fact, we believe that if we're going to progress economically as a province, if we're going to progress socially as a province, we have to find a way to ensure that public education is adequately funded, health care is adequately funded and it should not be the American style of health care, which is by definition, if you have money you get health care; if you don't have money you wait. You wait, you get sick and sometimes, too often, you die. We know that's where the Conservatives are.

The Liberals say, if I can quote them, that it would be a big mistake to reverse this income tax scheme, or any part of it that is taking money out of health care, money out of education, money out of environmental protection, money away from community services, and put it back into those services which will do the most good for the most people. That's what Liberals say. Again, I think we need some clarity on this issue. Liberals have said that they would institutionalize, they would cement this income tax scheme in place. This means that Liberals are prepared to see further cuts to health care, further cuts to education, further cuts to environmental protection, further cuts to the

community services that we all need if we're going to progress together.

We need some clarity on this issue; we need a great deal of clarity on this issue. What I hope will emerge today is we will get that clarity. As I say, this is the issue that is not going to go away as we head towards the next election. Either you believe that this income tax scheme is doing something beneficial for the province and that that benefit is greater than the cuts to health care, greater than the damage being done to education and greater than the damage being done to the environment, or you believe we'd be better off investing in health care, education, environmental protection and community services so we can do the most good for the most people. You can't be in both camps at the same time.

In kicking off this debate today, I look forward to listening to the comments of colleagues on all sides of the House. I hope at the end of the day positions will be clear. I hope all those people out there in Ontario who care very much about health care, care about education, care about environmental protection, care about community services will come away from this day with a much clearer picture of who stands where, who supports the income tax scheme that's cutting health care and education and who stands on the side of health care and education and environmental protection.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I'm pleased to join the debate and say very clearly at the outset that the government disagrees with this resolution and will vote against it. We disagree with its content and we disagree with its intent.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): What about the attack on the Liberals?

Mr Baird: We definitely agree with the attack on the Liberals, I say to the member for Beaches-Woodbine.

The resolution says the tax cut provides real benefits only to individuals with the highest income. Wrong, totally wrong, not the case at all. Folks with an income of as little as \$15,000 get the greatest benefit. Their tax cut is almost 50%. The \$24,000-a-year earners get a tax cut of almost 35%. A \$28,000 income gets a tax cut of 33%. Those making \$38,000 again get a tax cut of more than 30%, and I can only imagine what the tax cut of some of my colleagues across the way will be. This tax cut provides real benefits to working families in the province of Ontario.

The average household in my riding will see more than \$100 per household per month. What that's doing in our community to help create jobs and restore hope and opportunity is nothing short of incredible. The economy is doing well because tax cuts help create jobs.

When you factor in the fair share health levy promised in the Common Sense Revolution, it makes the income tax cuts brought forward by the Harris government progressive; it provides real benefit to the people who need it most. Those lower-income working families get a higher tax cut than the rich folks who live on Bay Street in the member for Fort York's riding, those bankers that he represents. Those making more than \$68,000 a year get

less than a 30% tax cut. So we know the tax cut is progressive and helps those people who need it the most, and that's indeed good news. In fact, the very rich, like some of my colleagues in the third party, can get as little as an 18% tax cut, so we know how progressive it is and how good-news it is, real benefits for working families.

1540

The opposition doesn't want to hear about the real benefits to working families because it doesn't fit their preconceived notion of the world. As a result of the tax cut, the top 10% of earners will pay a bigger portion of Ontario's personal income tax, 45.9%, and that's before they cut taxes when they paid only 42.8%. In other words, their share of the personal income tax burden is actually up by more than 7%, and that's important to note.

Tax cuts create jobs. Since the tax cut started, almost half of the new jobs created in Canada have been in Ontario.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): Say that again, because I don't think they heard it.

Mr Baird: My friend wants me to say it again, and I will. Since the tax cut started, almost half of the new jobs created in Canada have been created right here in Ontario. There were 62,000 last month alone; 62% of the jobs created in Canada, the member for Lanark says.

And 408,000 jobs have been created in Ontario since September 1995. By contrast, in the 1990-95 period, Ontario lost jobs while the rest of the country of Canada gained, and that's worth noting.

This resolution says the tax cut is financed from health cuts. Wrong, wrong. In fact, the tax cut is bringing in more revenue. When we cut taxes, the government's bringing in more money. Isn't that funny? It's exactly like the last government but in reverse. When they raised taxes, they brought in less revenue. When they squeezed harder there just wasn't as much to squeeze, and when we cut taxes we bring in more money, particularly from high-income earners. They're paying more taxes now than they did before as a share of the provincial income tax revenues. The members opposite don't want to talk about that because it doesn't fit into their political plans. Never let the facts get in the way.

They talk about cuts to health care. We've increased spending on health care by more than \$1 billion, which is important to note.

I want to say to the member for Lake Nipigon that I can respect the New Democratic Party. They want big government, they want big spending and they're going to be honest about it in the public policy discussions in Ontario. They disagree with the tax cut and they want to get rid of it. At least they're prepared to pony up and be honest with the people of Ontario, unlike our colleagues in Liberal Party, who always want to play both sides of the same issue. That's something that's important.

What do the Liberals say on taxes? "It doesn't make sense to offer a tax break which is going to cost us \$5 billion a year. We simply cannot offer that tax break without delving into expenditures ultimately in health care and education." Who said that? Dalton McGuinty, in a

Kitchener-Waterloo debate on September 22, 1996. That was then and this is now. They want to keep the tax cut. They have changed their minds yet again.

That's yet another reversal, because during the leadup to the last election campaign, "McLeod Reinforces Commitment to Cut Taxes." This is a press release with the Liberal logo on the top. Before balancing the budget, they wanted to cut taxes by \$2 billion.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): One per cent per year. Get your facts straight.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, come to order.

Mr Baird: A \$2-billion tax cut. "Ontario Liberal leader Lyn McLeod said tonight a Liberal government in Ontario would cut taxes. 'It's time the government started following a policy for zero tolerance for tax increases. A Liberal government will cut overall taxes.'" Very, very interesting, and now they seem to have change their mind.

What else do they say about tax cuts? "I'm not interested in raising taxes on any front. It would send a terrible signal to the business community here to tax a competitive jurisdiction." That was from a speech and question-and-answer session in London, Ontario, on February 9, 1998. So we don't think the Liberals are going to go back on their tax cut commitment.

But there's a very interesting article — Speaker, I know you're going to be interested in this — from NOW magazine, "How will Grits pay for school pledge?"

"Not surprisingly, the question of how to pay for promises like education improvements was on the agenda at the Liberal caucus retreat in Collingwood last week. MPP Gerard Kennedy" — Dalton McGuinty's right-hand man, quite literally —

Mr Gerretsen: He's his left-hand man.

Mr Baird: The left-hand man, the member says — "says he and some other caucus members favour a reconsideration of the position that they will 'maintain the fiscal framework' — McGuinty's words for keeping the Tory tax cut in place."

I'll go on, Speaker, because I know you're interested in this:

"We spent a fair bit of time talking about that (in Collingwood)," says Kennedy. "That was certainly the centrepiece of a lot of the discussion. It covered a pretty good gamut of points of view. I don't think we have a consensus yet, so we could say there's a difference of opinion here. You can expect that, but we really did do some wrestling, looking at the measures Liberals would like to take and how they would be costed."

So we know now that the Liberals are thinking about raising taxes in Ontario and that there is a fight going on — another fight — in the Liberal caucus. Some folks want to raise taxes to pay for big government and big spending and others want to go into the election platform —

Mr Gerretsen: You don't know what you're talking about.

Mr Baird: I've got the quote right here from Gerard Kennedy. If the member opposite wants to cut down Gerard Kennedy, I'll let him do that on his own time.

The Liberals have a big problem. They want to have it both ways. They want to spend more money on health, they want to spend more money on education, they want to allow school boards to raise taxes again. The member for York South, Mr Kennedy, has said he wants to raise welfare rates by 21.6%. That's going to cost more than \$1 billion a year. We'd like to know how they intend to pay for that.

They want to bring back quotas; the Liberals will have to, inevitably, after the election, should they form a government.

The cost to pay off the union bosses will cost this province billions: higher WCB premiums to pay for increased benefits; bringing back Bill 40, which would send a terrible message to job creation and investment in the province of Ontario.

What else are the Liberals saying?

"I think people understand that when we make promises, generally that calls for higher tax increases" — CKCO TV interview, March 1, 1998.

"I wouldn't give you a tax cut" — Dalton McGuinty, July 29, 1997.

"Taxes are too high for too many" — Dalton McGuinty, speech to the Liberal Party of Canada, February 22, 1997.

"I think government should always reserve the right to raise taxes." Who said that? Dalton McGuinty said that as well.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): Which way was the wind blowing?

Mr Baird: Which way was the wind blowing? the member asks. That is indeed the case.

As the member for Rainy River said, the Liberals can't have it both ways. When the clock strikes 6, we will know where the Liberals stand on these issues. I know some of their caucus colleagues want to know where they stand.

I have an article here from the Hamilton Spectator back a few years ago:

"Outside the meetings, some Liberals expressed concerns the party will be handicapped in opposition by a campaign platform that advocated many of the things the Tories are now doing.

"'We are all signing from the same song sheet,' said rookie member Sandra Pupatello of Windsor. 'How can we go in guns blazing when we would have been doing the same things?'"

This is the Liberal member for Windsor-Sandwich saying this.

"Mike Colle, a member of the west Toronto riding of Oakwood, said his party strayed too far to the right in opposing the NDP and should return to its left-of-centre roots. 'I don't want to be part of the mushy middle any more.'"

I know Mike Colle believed that when he said it.

But they aren't alone. In the Toronto Star, Friday, September 8, 1995, the member for Windsor-Walkerville, the member for Windsor-Sandwich's colleague and my good friend, said, "We've been far too fuzzy for far too long." He went on to say, "We're going to have to some

day decide what we stand for and then stand for it. We have some serious navel gazing to do."

I agreed with the member for Windsor-Walkerville when he said that back not too many years ago.

The Liberal Party has got to come clear on this. They've got to come to the table and tell us where they stand, how they would pay for their risky fiscal framework.

The member for Hamilton Centre said in debate here last week that Dalton McGuinty has stopped saying he'll increase health and education spending. Now he's starting to talk about building walls around those funding envelopes. They can't have it both ways. They've got to come clean with the people of Ontario.

The New Democratic Party is at least being honest. They disagree with the tax cut. They want to increase spending in the government and they're going to tell the people of Ontario exactly how they would do it. It's time the Liberal Party went on the record and said the same thing.

1550

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for York South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Health concerning government cutbacks in emergency room funding. This matter will be debated at 6 o'clock today.

Further debate? The member for Kenora.

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): What we've seen here is certainly what we call government by public relations gimmicks. We've seen this throughout northern Ontario, throughout northwestern Ontario; we've actually seen it throughout the entire province.

I cannot think of a better example than seeing the Premier, after I asked him a question in the House regarding his trip to Ear Falls, get up there and make an announcement that they'd been waiting months for in terms of keeping their clinic open. On the great day the Premier arrived in Ear Falls, he said, yes, there will be \$300,000 a year to keep the clinic in Ear Falls open, a clinic which was needed for the health care services of the residents of Ear Falls and that area. What we found out and what we've been talking about in the last six or seven days is that it was nothing but a photo op. There was no money that went along with this announcement.

Today, we finally get it from the Premier that the money will flow into Ear Falls. But up until this time, it was only a photo op, with the Premier up there having to say something positive. He actually said it, but after much debate and much questioning in the House — I indicated at one point that it was really unusual. I'd never, ever seen in the history of this province a Premier go into a community such as Ear Falls, that size, make this fantastic announcement, and then nothing happened for over 135 days. Nothing went into that area at all.

Madam Speaker, you'll know that I've raised as well the issue of our psychiatric patients ending up in jail cells in this province, something that most people would think would be unheard of in Ontario today, one of the greatest

provinces in one of the greatest countries in the world to live in. We have patients, health care psychiatric patients, ending up in jail cells. This happens.

If you run into a psychiatric problem in northwestern Ontario after 5 o'clock on a weekday or before 9 o'clock on a weekend, or on a weekend, instead of getting the psychiatric services you need in a hospital, you end up in a jail cell. Again, I've brought that problem to the minister's attention many times, to the Premier's attention. How can they allow that to happen in Ontario today?

This issue is actually increasing with time. Just the other day, October 19, yesterday, we have a letter directed to the superintendent of the jail. This is to the Kenora jail. The psychiatrists have written the jail to tell them that they will be unable to provide further psychiatric services to that jail. Let me just quote from that letter.

The psychiatrist goes on to write:

"I have made the ministry aware for some time that Kenora is significantly understaffed for" psychiatric services "and we need a significant commitment if we are to meet the needs of the district. To date, there has been no solution" — I repeat, no solution — "and we must impose strict limits on what we are able to accomplish, given the above.

"To that end, we are unable to provide psychiatric assessments at the jail other than for patients whom we have previously followed. I sincerely regret having to make this decision, but we have little option at this time.

"Should you have any specific concerns, please address them to the Ministry of Health, as the solution to this dilemma is solely within their domain."

That's signed by Dr Watler, a psychiatrist at the Lake of the Woods District Hospital, telling the jail that he can no longer provide additional services to them; as I indicated earlier, where we have psychiatric patients in the province of Ontario ending up in jail cells.

I guess what we see in a number of cases is a government here that wants to run government and come up with solutions through ads. If they have a problem where a patient is waiting for a number of months and it's brought to their attention, what do they do? They come up with an ad, they come up with a gimmick and try to sell their programs to the people of Ontario. Let me tell this government, let me tell the Premier, the Minister of Health, the cabinet, it's not working in northwestern Ontario. When the money does not flow, the doctors are not there to provide the services we need.

I've spoken a number of times on the anaesthetists' services that we require in the Lake of the Woods District Hospital in Kenora in order that we can carry on with the surgery program. At the present time, the government is dragging four of our GPs through what they would like to call negotiations. The four GPs who are being dragged through these are threatening to remove services. That would mean there would be no more operations in that hospital, that they would have to take surgery off the books. That means that anybody having a possible problem with a delivery would have to go to another facility.

Again we're finding that the other facilities are saying: "No, we can't accept these patients because we are overburdened. We're not going to accept these patients." All the government has to do is sit down to meaningful negotiations with those four GPs and work out a solution. That's all we're asking. The GPs are telling me that no one from the government is sitting there working with them to find a solution to this problem, a government that has just no interest in working out solutions. They seem to want to bring people on and create animosity between groups. They've done it with the teachers, we've seen it with the nurses, now we're seeing it with our doctors, some of our most important people, people whom we in northwestern Ontario depend on.

People who are going to be moving into our communities will be looking and finding out whether we have those services when they actually want to come into northwestern Ontario and work. Another gimmick that the Minister of Health came up with over a year ago was announcing — again another announcement — \$36 million to attract doctors to our rural and northern communities. Madam Speaker, you will remember I've raised that issue a number of times: Where is the money? It's just not there. We're seeing it over and over again. I have to agree with the NDP that we are seeing problems in terms of our health care services, in terms of our educational services throughout the northwest.

But when it comes to the unlikelihood of the NDP suggesting that they will raise taxes in one portion of the taxation sector, I have a problem because we've heard it before. We've heard the NDP talk about raising taxes for the rich. Unfortunately, when we heard that when they were in government in the years 1990-95, the rich happened to turn out to be anyone who had a job. We found out that the taxes were raised for those across the board. It concerns me that this is the only party I know of in North America at this time that is suggesting tax increases rather than holding the line. I have a real problem with that.

Maybe Mr Harris should have waited for the budget to be balanced before his cuts. Maybe he should have ensured that we weren't going to be facing the situations we are facing today in terms of emergency health care services, in terms of anaesthetists, in terms of our psychiatric services, in terms of another program which I failed to mention, the diabetic education program in Kenora. I've brought to the attention of this House many times the importance of that program to a very significant group in northwestern Ontario; again a non-commitment from the Minister of Health to allow that program to go beyond one year. They waited until the last hour in determining an additional year of funding for that program but absolutely refused to give them a commitment to a very important program.

Getting back to the NDP and their tax increase, we have to take a look at that. At the time that I sat in this House with the NDP in government and the Treasurer, the Minister of Finance at the time, telling us that he's going to spend his way out of a recession, that hurt a lot of

people. It had a great, devastating effect in terms of the finances of this province. They ended up being the worst financial managers in the history of Ontario. The facts just point to that: four years of huge deficits averaging \$10.3 billion a year. The NDP spent 24% more than they raised over four years.

The provincial debt — this is a very interesting figure and one that I'm sure you'll hear again from me — grew from \$39.3 billion in 1990 to — guess what? I'm sure you know the figure — \$90.4 billion at the end of 1994-95. That was when the NDP government was trying to spend their way out of a recession. The public debt interest costs increased from \$3.8 billion in 1989-90 to double that, to \$7.9 billion in 1994-95. These are things that people are going to be asking about when they hear about an NDP platform that says yes, they're going to reverse the tax scheme; they talk about reversing the tax scheme.

1600

I would warn anyone out there who thinks they're going to get an easy ride with the NDP suggestion that they're going to do this to take a look at that fiscal record when they were in government and we had huge deficits, on an average of \$10.3 billion a year, when the debt grew — I want to repeat these figures; I think they're very important — from \$39.3 billion in 1990 to \$90.4 billion at the end of 1994-95. This is a record that the wannabe Premier, Mr Hampton, is going to have to answer for when we take a look at the next election.

Tuition fees, an area that I had a great number of people come to me about and suggest that they were troubled with: If I go back and take a look again at the NDP record on tuition fees, we find out that they increased them 50%. College fees increased 36% from 1990 to 1995; so university tuition fees up 50%, college tuition fees up 36% from 1990 to 1995.

I can see what the NDP is trying to do in terms of this resolution, in terms of what's happening to health care and to education throughout the province and in northern Ontario, particularly in northwestern Ontario. But when it comes to their resolution in terms of taxation — the only political party, as I said earlier, that I know is suggesting a tax increase for the people of this province — I cannot agree with this resolution.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate. I want to just pick up on a couple of things that the previous speaker mentioned, not because it was any particular member of the Liberal caucus; he's just the one who spoke before me.

It's interesting to listen to Liberals in Ontario talk about credibility around budget matters and around the economy and about fiscal responsibility when they're the ones who in 1990 were out beating their chests in pride over the \$25-million surplus they said they had that evaporated after the election and turned into, when one did a proper accounting of the books, a \$3-billion deficit. Where do they get off preaching to anybody on how the economy and the budget of this province ought to operate?

It was really interesting to listen. That was the first speaker up from the Liberal caucus who has had to try to

defend and explain this little dance that the Liberals are planning to do in the next election, whereby they will be making the same promises as the NDP in terms of health care investment, education investment, social service investment and environmental protection, but they're not going to touch that tax cut. They're going to leave that tax cut in place for all their rich friends because they can't handle the politics of what happens if they say that they're going to take that money and reinvest it. At the end of the day, the money has to come from somewhere.

Originally, the Liberals were hoping that they would have the opportunity to live off the avails of the Tory surplus, but Wall Street and Bay Street and a few other stock markets around the world have taken care of that. There isn't going to be a surplus. In fact, if the economy continues to fall, who knows where we will be 12 months from now in terms of not just the economy in Ontario but across the North American continent and potentially around the entire world. So the ability to say there will be money left over from the Tories' tainted economic agenda to invest in schools and hospitals isn't there.

The Liberals are hoping that somehow they can manage — that's why it's so interesting to watch today's debate. It's the first opportunity where we all get a chance to hold their feet to the fire and say, "You've talk about investing in health care, talked about investing in education, talked about investing in our communities, but where's the money?" Where are you going to get the money? The money's got to come from somewhere. It will be interesting how they vote because at the end of the day —

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: I hear my colleague from Hamilton East, as I heard the member for St Catharines. Both are well-noted progressives within the Liberal Party and I've got to believe that they're just squirming big time because they know that at the end of the day that the reality is you cannot promise to improve health care and education if you don't show where the money is going to come from. As long as the majority of their colleagues insist on following the Harris tax scam, the reality is that money is not there.

What we're going to be left with in the next election is not three alternatives. There will be three parties, but there won't be three alternatives. There will be the Mike Harris version of what Ontario ought to look like, which I think my leader Howard Hampton very effectively outlined in his leadoff speech, or there will be an approach by New Democrats that invests real money in education, real money in health care, real money in social services and real money in environmental protection, and will show where the money is going to come from.

The Libs are going to be offering up some watered-down version of both and I'm shocked — I want to say I really am shocked — because they've been here before. In 1990 they tried to be a little bit of everything and a version of what the different parties offered. They started at 50% in the polls and went down in flames and the NDP formed a majority government. In 1995, under the leadership of the Liberal who sits beside me now in the

House — on the edge of the Liberal caucus; I want to be clear to anybody watching that there's a line here, a very solid line.

Mr Baird: A line in the sand.

Mr Christopherson: A line in the sand. Under her leadership there was the Liberal red book, which really was just a watered-down version of what the Tories were offering under the Common Sense Revolution. Probably, if I can just point out, the best example to me was on workfare. The Tories, much to their discredit in my opinion, shamefully said that forced labour is something we ought to bring back in the province of Ontario. They took that position, they were clear about it and they ran on it. The Liberals condemned that — the last thing I need is Tories handing me paperwork in the middle of a speech, even if it is against the Libs. It's always worth reading, but not out loud.

I was talking about the Libs and the Tories having said that they were going to go for workfare and what that means. What did the Liberals do? The Liberals condemned —

Mr Baird: Read it, read it.

Mr Christopherson: John is indicating that I must look at this. Yes, that's what I'm going to say, John. Thanks.

Now I'm worried about saying it.

The Liberals condemned, of course, the Tories' workfare and called it everything that it is, all the awful things that it is, but then they ran on a platform that said: "We don't agree with workfare because that's not right. What we do agree with is mandatory opportunity."

Give me a break. Mandatory opportunity. A perfect Liberal slogan for a Liberal view of how you just slip and slide on the issues.

I want to say that that is the essence. In addition to putting forward our economic base, if you will, in terms of where are we going to get the money to invest in the key things that matter to us, we also want to flush out the Libs. It's no big secret. Every member in this House who read the resolution knew that. That's what it's meant to do. It's meant to show them for what they are, which is — well, I can't go there.

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Hon David Turnbull (Minister without Portfolio): I don't think you're allowed to use that word in here.

Mr Christopherson: That's right, I realized I can't say that. But I can go on to describe why it's important that we understand where the money is going to come from. I offer up, admittedly given the poll numbers of both the other two parties, the governing Tories and the official opposition Liberals, that it is indeed important for us to be able to stake out our ground and provide an alternative that is meaningful.

I want to say very sincerely that, as much as I know my Tory colleagues will disagree with the essence of what is in this resolution and what our platform is, I think there's an acknowledgement that it is an alternative view of Ontario that needs to be debated and articulated from now until the election and during the election campaign.

Again, since there are two opposition parties here and we will be attempting to do the same thing, we feel it is important that when we hear our colleagues in the Liberal Party stand up and condemn your phony tax scam — because it is — and when they stand up and condemn the cuts to health care, the closing of hospitals, the damage you have done to the world-class health care system we have, they're right.

When they stand up and condemn you for the schools that are going to close all across this province, the chaos that has been created in the education system, the morale damage — at least, the morale damage is only one item in terms of teachers, and that affected all our kids, and I have a 6-year-old daughter, so I feel this as passionately as anyone can — they're right to say those things.

But what upsets us here in the NDP is that, while they say they're going to correct it, the only way you can correct the kinds of things you have done — because as much as it's policy, at the end of the day it's really more about money, the money you took out to give to your rich friends. What upsets us the most is to have another political party say they disagree with you the way we do and they want to see investment in health care, education, social services and environmental protection the way we do, but they don't show anyone how they're going to pay for it. In this day and age, politics has changed a lot. People understand a lot more how things operate. Probably better and more than many members of this House, the public understands what's going on. It's important to have this kind of debate.

Let me also speak a little bit to the essence of what we are putting forward. We are not, regardless of what the Tories and the Liberals want to say, suggesting we are going to raise taxes for everyone. That is not the case. We are saying, however, that there are people in this province who are doing very, very well by the Mike Harris agenda, in particular its phony tax scam, thank you very much.

That doesn't require a lot of convincing with people. People themselves know that the tax scam has meant to them — what? Anybody watching right now, what has it meant to you? Maybe a cup of coffee a week, maybe a few bucks here and there, probably not even noticeable. Certainly most of the people I speak to when I travel across the province tell me they don't even notice the impact of the tax cut in terms of anything in their paycheque.

But boy do people notice when you start closing hospitals, when you start seeing, as we did in Hamilton, that there's a \$38-million deficit in the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp budget as it stands right now because of what the Tory government has done that has the CEO of the second-largest hospital in Canada, that's in Hamilton, saying, and I'm paraphrasing, "We can't meet any more demand on our system, because we don't have the cash."

The latest announcement to come from our hospital is that they're going to have to borrow the money to get through to the end of the fiscal year. I'm not aware that this has ever happened before in the history of Ontario. That is not the way we operate hospitals.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): You should feel comfortable talking about borrowing. You know all about borrowing — \$11-billion deficits.

The Acting Speaker: Solicitor General, come to order, please.

Mr Christopherson: Besides, it was Mike Harris who said: "Oh, I won't do anything to hospitals. I won't do anything to health care. I'm going to keep it at the same level." They brag about the fact that it's up a bit, but the reality is, when you look at the increased demand on the health care system because of birth rates and, probably more importantly, the fact that our population is aging, the baby boomers are now getting to the point where they're requiring more and more health care services and more extensive and more expensive health care services, that is not adequate funding to meet the health care needs. If it were, we wouldn't have the kinds of headlines we do. That's what's happening in my community.

If you're one of those who make \$300,000, \$400,000, \$500,000, \$1 million — I don't know an awful lot of them, and I'm sure there are a lot of people who are watching this who don't know a lot of them, but they're out there. They make that kind of money. When you take a look at the Tory tax scam in terms of what it has meant for them, we're talking serious coin. We are talking tens of thousands of after-tax dollars. That's real money. You start cutting somebody a cheque for 20, 30, 40 grand and say, "There you go; that's what you get for voting for us," hell, I'd think you're wonderful. Who wouldn't?

The problem is, there's only a tiny little percentage of people who get that kind of benefit, and for those people, in terms of the health care and the school crisis, at the blink of an eye they can just send their kids off to a private school. They're lucky, and that's fine; it's their right in a free and democratic society, and I don't think people even begrudge that. But it does give those who already have a lot an out that no one else has.

We're close enough to the American border with that privatized American health care system that if you earn a few hundred thousand dollars a year and you feel that the publicly underfunded health care system doesn't give you what you want for your family members, then you can bloody well cut the cheque that will make sure you can get the services down in the States.

Isn't that exactly what our access to universal medical attention was all about and was meant to prevent: that those who have money can have their kids' health taken care of and those who don't have the money are out of luck? Hasn't the example of the American system proven that we went down the right road, that Tommy Douglas, the Premier of Saskatchewan — the CCF Premier, I would point out, which was the predecessor of the NDP. The first social democratic government in North America was the government that brought in the first universal health care system on the entire continent. As New Democrats, we continue to be proud of that. That was all about preventing the kind of scenario I've just described.

By the way, I would point out for the information of the Tories that that was also the first government, provincial or national, in the last three decades that brought in a balanced budget. They brought in the balanced budget that the federal Liberals, the federal Tories and the provincial Liberals and provincial Tories only talked about.

So it's important to understand that it is entirely possible, if you set it as your goal, to have an economy that works for the benefit of the population, that is responsible, that is credible and that can still be socially responsible in the way, I would point out and remind members, that is consistent with the things that made Canada four times the best place to live, as voted by the United Nations.

It wasn't because we took care of our rich better than any other country, it wasn't because we sold off our health care system, it wasn't because we slashed our environmental protection that we were voted the best country in the world to live in by the United Nations four times. It was because of the kind of society we built, a society that had a world-class education system that was accessible to everyone, a world-class health care system that made sure nobody went without proper health care just because they didn't have the dollars. That's the price that we pay. That's the price that the vast majority of people in Ontario pay for this kind of agenda.

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What we are saying is that with only 6% of the population, because that's the number who make more than \$80,000, we can generate, by going back to the tax rate — this is not some huge eat-the-rich kind of ridiculous, radical, wild-eyed thing that the Tories and Liberals are trying to portray. What we're talking about is going back to taxation levels that are back to 1995, just that. And by the way, these are folks who have done very, very well since 1995. What we're saying is, by asking that 6% to pay their fair share, the same share they were paying in 1995, we get in excess of \$1.5 billion.

That is real money that we can put into health care to make sure it remains the kind of world-class system we were so proud of once. We can put that real money back into our school system so that our children have a real future, not the hollow one that Premier Harris talks about.

That's the essence of the resolution before us. It's to say that the polarization that has gone on under this Mike Harris Tory government — that the very, very wealthy, the most powerful, influential people in our province, who already have in abundance, pay back a little of what they have gotten out of the three years that Mike Harris was in government. We're talking about 6% of the population going back to the same tax rates we had in 1995, and by virtue of that, we can do what we need to, or at least make a really good start, with real money, in health care and in education.

The vast majority of the population, the 94% who are left over, who by the way are getting next to nothing in this — the government likes to talk about percentages. Give me a break. Who wouldn't take 10% of \$1 million over 30% of 35 grand a year any day of the week? Don't

play that game. That's the reality of what's happening here. You've convinced the vast majority of people that somehow they've gotten the same benefit that the very wealthy have, and that's not the case. The very wealthy have done very well. The rest of the population are the ones who are suffering under the kind of heartless cuts you've imposed; not the necessary efficiencies that any reasonable person would agree to but heartless, inconsiderate, damaging cuts to those things that have made this a great province and a great country.

We believe, as New Democrats, that if we follow the direction that's outlined in our resolution today, we can begin to put ourselves back on track and take us back to the kind of province and the kind of country that have been the envy of the world. We can do it.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Having listened to the member for Hamilton Centre, there's just no question in my mind that the New Democratic Party of Ontario is indeed an authority on the tax, spend and borrow cycle that's gone on in this province for the years from 1990 to 1995.

They formed an unholy alliance with the Liberals back in 1985-87, and you couldn't tell the difference in that coalition as to who was who. As you look across the House today, the way they vote, the way they think, the way they speak, they all believe the very same thing. They are both specialists in spending. The Liberals did a little better job. They were more of a specialist on taxation. The NDP have specialized in borrowing. As you can see, the Liberals doubled the spending; the NDP, in their five-year term, doubled the debt.

In both cases, they have been opposed to tax cuts right from the very beginning. It's surprising that the NDP — and you would know best about this, Madam Speaker — have now taken a different twist: They're only opposing tax cuts for the top 6%. Therefore, I gather they agree with the other 94% who are getting a tax cut. The NDP's present cure seems to be the same old prescription that created the decline of the province throughout the 1990s.

I really have to wonder who in the leader of the third party's office calls the shots. Who is in that headquarters? Who comes up with these high-tax solutions that seem to be the solution to absolutely everything? They're convinced that if you only get those taxes up high enough, sooner or later the patient will respond. Well, I have bad news for them. The NDP almost killed the Ontario patient back in the early 1990s. Tax, spend and borrow was their basic policy.

The leader of the third party keeps talking about increasing taxes on the rich and wonders — maybe he has never wondered about the brain drain. Why do we lose so many of our people to the US and other countries? When people have choices they will indeed flee high-tax jurisdictions; people like our professors, our physicians, our engineers, computer experts —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Even veterinarians.

Mr Galt: Even veterinarians and top administration. These are the people who have the most to lose. Ontario for a long time had been the home of low tuition fees and

high income and property taxes. It makes sense: get trained in Ontario and then flee and go to a place where the taxes are much lower.

It would appear that we are indeed on the right track, as you look at some of the recent polls indicating the PCs of Ontario at 58%, on the right track. They agree with the government's direction. Why? Because of the recovery plan that our party has put in place. We've had the courage to carry through with those commitments which include cutting taxes. We've made the tough decisions of cutting taxes, reducing spending and eliminating red tape and it's now paying off, to the jealousy of the NDP and the Liberals.

It was only yesterday in Kingston, at the Premier's conference on jobs and prosperity, that five youths were telling us that we're not making enough tax cuts. It's just too small. It should be 50%, both federal and provincial. They understand how the cutting of taxes stimulates the economy and increases the revenue.

Even a grade 9 student who spoke showed us a graph of how things had changed. The one interesting graph he showed was where Pierre Trudeau became the Prime Minister of Canada and the disaster afterwards, the person who was the father of the debt. When Pierre Trudeau came to office, the interest rate was low and there was practically no debt in Canada. When he left there was a record high debt, there was a record high level of interest, and he kept telling us that the deficit and the debt are tools to be used. I wonder who was used. It was the people of Canada, the Canadians who were used. By the time he left office, the public thought that everything would come from government. They didn't realize the horrendous debt that those Liberals had laid on this country.

Then we have the provincial Liberals here. They're supporting what Jean Chrétien, the present Prime Minister, is doing. The NDP, and I give credit to them, brought forth two motions that required unanimous consent: one, to debate excess monies that had been accumulated from employment insurance and, two, to debate the federal cuts on transfer payments in Ontario. There was not a single person in the NDP or a single person in the Conservative Party that said no. Where did the no come from? It came from the Liberals protecting the federal Liberals and their ridiculous economic policy.

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): Puppets.

Mr Galt: The puppets for the federal government. A Liberal is a Liberal is a Liberal. It's most unfortunate. Anyway, that just happens to be how a Liberal provincially and a Liberal federally will perform.

The Harris government has a prescription for economic recovery. It has four ingredients. First, get spending under control, and you might ask why. Well, all over the world, particularly in North America where there are smaller governments, there are higher levels of economic growth. They just go hand in hand. We inherited a debt of \$11.3 billion, dropped it to \$4 billion —

Hon Mr Turnbull: Deficit.

Mr Galt: Deficit, sorry. Those two words keep bouncing around. It's down to \$4 billion and by 2000-01

it will be at zero. I predict it will be sooner than that. It's tremendous how it has come down.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): We still have a deficit after three and a half years.

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Mr Galt: I just heard the NDP complaining that when they came to office to a balanced budget —

Mr Pouliot: I am trying to stay out of the poorhouse, Mr Speaker.

Le Président suppléant (M. Gilles Morin): M. le député de Lac-Nipigon.

Mr Galt: — the Liberals had a deficit of over \$3 billion, but when we came to office we found there were two sets of books and we had to put them together to find there was \$11.3 billion. Spending since 1995 of \$58.3 billion has been brought down to \$54.3 billion in spite of the federal Liberals cutting health spending by more than \$2 billion.

When the Canada Health Act came in, the federal government put 50 cents on the dollar for health care.

Mr Wildman: You had to borrow \$5 billion to finance your tax break, running up the deficit.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Algoma.

Mr Galt: That dropped to 29 cents on the health care dollar back in 1981, and where is it today? They keep cutting federally in their transfer payments and Ontario now gets 7.6 cents on the dollar that we spend on health care.

What happened to post-secondary education? It started out at 50 cents on the dollar. It's now less than 10 cents on the dollar. Then the feds totally wiped out everything to do with apprenticeship programs, although I hear a rumour they may be backing off that particular one.

What's the second ingredient for this prescription? It's tax cuts. Everywhere that taxes are lower, it attracts jobs, it attracts investments. Just look across Canada; look at any of the US states. Since July 1998, thanks to our Treasurer, the income tax rate in this province is the lowest in Canada, dropping from some 58% to slightly over 40% of the federal rate. It means that the average family will save some \$1,385, and these are tax-free dollars that will be saved. That's really like getting a salary bonus of well over \$2,000.

When our 1998 budget came in, there were some 36 tax cuts that will be brought in over the next several years. Small business is indeed important to this province, a topic I've spoken to on many occasions. Last year small business created some 82% of the new private sector jobs in this province. We have supported small business in many ways, particularly through some of our job creation efforts, by reducing the employer health tax to a payroll of some \$400,000. That tax was brought in by the Liberals. We've reduced the bureaucracy and red tape, a lot of which was brought in by the NDP. We've reduced the personal income tax, brought in by both Liberals and NDP. Over the next eight years we'll reduce the corporate tax from 9.5% to 4.75%. This will help some 90,000 small businesses. We're also reducing the education tax on commercial and industrial businesses by \$500,000. In

Northumberland by 2005 that will represent \$1.7 million less in taxes that the commercial and industrial taxpayer will have to pay.

I know this is all very foreign to the Liberals and to the NDP in their coalition, but it is helping to restore competitiveness and improve confidence to investment and business and consumers in this province. High taxes kill jobs and reduce productivity. I can tell you the students who spoke to us in Kingston yesterday understand this. They explained it to the group. The member for Kingston and The Islands was there to hear them. They were so effective, he was impressed. I know he had to be impressed, because this was coming from the youth of our province, the people who will be paying taxes when we're in our senior citizens' homes.

When taxes get high, small businesses spend most of their time and their money trying to avoid these taxes, when they should be out there working on their business and working on productivity. It causes entrepreneurs to lose interest in their work. As income goes up, they lose most of it to taxation. The University of Waterloo, in its master of taxation program, states, "Most personal and business decisions are structured to minimize tax liabilities." Who's surprised by a statement such as this? I'm sure it's a coalition of the NDP and the Liberals. Reduced taxes give small businesses the opportunity to compete and the results are investment in job creation and in the future.

Ingredient number three is reduction of government regulations. Excessive red tape does indeed increase the cost of doing business. It's a deterrent to investment and to job creation. The Red Tape Commission has amended or repealed some 1,500 regulations. They brought in the business impact test to help stem the tide of —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Normally we can hear the member for Northumberland so well, but when there are so many interjections I have trouble listening to him, so please.

Mr Galt: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for recognizing the importance of this presentation.

Ingredient number four is more labour market flexibility. Countries where there is some flexibility in the labour market certainly create jobs and there's more economic activity. We repealed that job-killing NDP Employment Equity Act and we've reformed the labour code. It now requires a secret ballot for union certification and for strike votes, and we've removed the ban on replacement workers. What has the result of all this been? The result is in just slightly over three years in office, the economy in Ontario is booming: Ontario has created over 400,000 net new jobs since 1995; unemployment is down to 7.1%. Investment is up, taxes are down and the welfare numbers have dropped by a little over a third.

Compare that with BC, where the opposite policies have been in place under an NDP government. Out there, on the Canadian left coast, business investment has dropped due to onerous regulations and taxes. Economic growth has slowed and it's teetering today on recession.

The average taxpayer has dropped in their real disposable income. Unemployment is up. Increased numbers are moving out of the province of BC, particularly to Alberta.

The contrast is absolutely remarkable. Our approach has put us on a path to sustained economic growth, job creation and greater disposable incomes. It is indeed a winning prescription which will continue to produce success for our government and for the people of Ontario.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to join the debate and the comments that have been made. It was nice to see, when my colleague from Hamilton Centre was speaking, the great support he was getting from the Tories. I can see a sort of coalition starting to occur, the Tories and the NDP forming this great coalition going into the election campaign. I'm sure the brothers and sisters in the labour movement would really appreciate knowing what was happening.

When you look at the resolution, no one can disagree with the chaos this government has caused when it comes to health care in this province, the chaos they've caused when it comes to education in this province, the chaos they've caused when it comes to environmental protection in Ontario. It is an atrocious record. It is one of mismanagement; it is one of incompetence. We see it day after day. We see it when the Premier on the weekend has to stand up in Ottawa and publicly humiliate, embarrass, cast aside his Minister of Health and blame the Minister of Health for the fact that as Premier he has mismanaged and cannot control when money goes out. It is unbelievable.

It is the first time in the history of this province that a Premier stands up and says, "We approved something six months ago, but I have no control over when the money goes out." It is unheard of; it is unbelievable; it is unreal; it is not credible. The Premier calls the shots. I cannot believe that Mike Harris sat there for six months and did not know that not one cent was flowing. If he did, then it's total incompetence on the part of the Premier.

To hang out the Minister of Health, poor Elizabeth Witmer basically being ridiculed in front of 2,000 Tories, was absolutely disgraceful. But as we know, the Premier's loyalty in these last fleeting moments is gone. Norm Sterling has been a victim of that lack of loyalty by the Premier, Elizabeth Witmer and many other members. Clearly, you've shown your incompetence.

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But when you look at this resolution it clearly does distinguish — I know my colleague from Hamilton Centre has to do his best to help his party in its sagging fortunes, but he knows probably better than anybody in the NDP caucus the reality of the new Ontario, the reality of the new Canada and the reality of the new democratic institutions around the world. Frankly, raising taxes is not one of them.

Not even his brothers and sisters in the labour movement or the political parties across North America and around the world that are socialist or New Democrat agree with that philosophy. Roy Romanow knows that increasing taxes is not an option. Alexa McDonough

knows that increasing taxes is not an option. We know that. Glen Clark knows that increasing taxes is not an option. Tony Blair knows that raising taxes is not an option. These are men and women who have seen what the reality of modern-day politics and what the reality of governing today are all about. But for some reason the NDP in Ontario still believes that raising taxes is an option here.

We have made it very clear and my leader, Dalton McGuinty, has made it very clear that we will not raise taxes once we form the next government. It is that simple. People in Ontario who are looking for an alternative to the slash-and-burn Harris Tories will have an alternative. People in Ontario who want an alternative to the bully, to the nastiness, to the mean-spiritedness, to the divisiveness of Mike Harris and his Reform-a-Tories will have that alternative. They will have to choose between an NDP that says, "Elect us and we will raise your taxes," and a Liberal Party that says, "Elect us and we will not raise your taxes." Yes, it will be a clear choice, and we will put that choice to the people of Ontario.

Let's look at the record of the NDP in its five years of government. Here's a party that questions credibility on finances, on economics. Even my friends on the Tory side cannot disagree with this. In their five years of government, taxes increased across the board. This is the party that raised personal income tax. This is the party that raised retail sales tax, tobacco, fuel, corporation tax, mining tax, employer health tax, land transfer tax. This is the party that increased taxes in all those areas in the five years.

They took the debt, which took 130 years of Tory and Liberal governments combined to bring to \$39 billion — 130 years of governments in Ontario could not increase the debt to the magnitude that the NDP did in five. They increased the debt in five years more than 130 years of other governments in Ontario. That truly is an astounding achievement, and they want to talk to us about credibility when it comes to taxes, when it comes to raising taxes and when it comes to handling the finances of a province.

The deficit: \$10.3 billion a year in deficits.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): What about the coalition government, Peterson and Rae?

Mr Agostino: I appreciate the fact that my friends on the Tory side are heckling and agree with the NDP record. That's great, and I hope you go out there in the campaign and tell the people of Ontario that you do agree with their record. I think that's wonderful. Continue to do that. Continue to agree with the NDP record from when they were in government. Try to do them that favour, try to help them.

The reality is that the people of Ontario are not going to be fooled. We are going to deal with health care. We are going to deal with the environment. We are going to deal with education. I can tell you that we will unveil an election platform that will outline the costs and outline how we're going to pay for those costs.

It is simple to say, "Increase taxes." That is the simplest way of doing it, to say we're going to increase

taxes. That's simple. The NDP thinks it's simple, and we've seen their record. It is absolutely amazing. Talk about credibility. This is the party that's supposed to represent the labour movement. Remember that? The NDP is supposed to be the party of the labour movement. Remember who took collective agreements and bargaining rights away from working men and women in this province. Which party did that? Which party introduced the social contract, that said to every public service worker union in this province: "The contract you signed is null and void. We're going to rip it up. We're going to take away from you the right to collective bargaining"? That was an NDP government, not a Tory or a Liberal government. It was an NDP government that ripped up collective bargaining, ripped up contracts and took from labour leaders and working men and women across this province the right to bargain. This is the record: social contract, increased taxes time after time.

Mr Christopherson: And your answer was fire people, Dominic.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton Centre, please.

Mr Agostino: This is where they want us to maintain some credibility. Yes, there'll be some issues with which I agree with my friends on the left, but raising taxes is not one of them. The debate is not a question of whether or not we believe there should be improved health care. It is not a question of whether or not we believe there should be improvements in education. It is not a question of whether or not there should be improvements in environment and child care and social services in this province. It is a question of how we get there, and raising taxes is not how we're going to get there.

We have seen the impact already. This government that prides themselves on being fiscal conservatives and doing a great job has imposed on homeowners and businesses in Ontario the greatest increases they've seen in history as the result of your downloading, as the result of your mismanagement. You talk to people in my riding of Hamilton East, business owners whose taxes have gone up by 300% or 400%. Tell those people that you are not in favour of increasing taxes. It is a scam; it is a hoax.

Mr Guzzo: Have they ever heard of Chrétien?

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member for Ottawa-Rideau, please. You'll have an opportunity if you want to take advantage of it.

Mr Agostino: I understand the Tories get a little upset when we attack the NDP because the coalition starts to fall apart there for them. Just bear with us. You'll get your chance to prop up the NDP when you speak.

Let me go back to taxes. The Tories: Mike Harris is supposed to be the Taxfighter. Why don't you ask homeowners in my riding; why don't you ask homeowners in downtown Hamilton; why don't you ask homeowners on the Mountain and many other parts of our region, in Flamborough, if they think Mike Harris is not a Taxhiker. Ask them about their property taxes; ask them about their business taxes as a result of what you have done. It's a hoax. It's smoke and mirrors just like your hospital

announcements, just like the Premier's phony cheque-presenting ceremony this morning. It is nothing more than smoke and mirrors, and the people of Ontario will not buy your little shell game.

There are alternatives to this tired Tory government, to this mean-spirited group which believes that the way you move forward is by beating people up in Ontario, by putting people down, by dividing Ontario. There is an alternative. Very clearly we as the Liberal Party under Dalton McGuinty will unveil a platform that'll show clearly how we're going to improve education, how we're going to improve health care, how we're going to improve the environment. Unlike the NDP we will not increase taxes to get there, period.

Le Président suppléant: Monsieur le député de Lac Nipigon.

M Pouliot: Je vous remercie —

Interjection.

Mr Agostino: How many federal Tories were elected in Ontario?

The Acting Speaker: Order, the member for Hamilton East. You had your chance. The member for Lake Nipigon now has the floor; only the member for Lake Nipigon.

Mr Pouliot: I take a great deal of pride and pleasure in saying a few words regarding Mr Hampton, our leader, the future Premier of the province of Ontario, regarding his resolution vis-à-vis the tax scheme.

I want to share this with you, Mr Speaker. On the way to work this morning, I was right at Bay and Wellesley and I had the good fortune to see three of my distinguished colleagues. Ironically, a true story, they were waiting for the light to change to come to Queen's Park. I will not name names because I wish to save people some embarrassment.

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Interjection: How early this morning?

Mr Pouliot: I asked — early this morning — my Conservative colleague, "How are you?"

He said, "Gilles, nice to see you." He said: "Fine. I'm up about a half." In the Conservative jargon — you must understand here that it's the rich against us. Markets were up, so the Conservative was having a good day. Futures and commodities markets were good.

Then I asked one of my New Democrat colleagues, "How are you?" He said, "Gilles, not so fine." I said: "You want to talk? What's the problem?" He said: "On my way to work, I saw so many people without shelter, and I thought: 'What about the richest people who don't need the tax cut, that 6%? Why shouldn't we take that money and use it for shelter for the less fortunate, among other needs?'"

Then I asked a Liberal. He said, "How are you, Gilles?" I said, "More importantly, how are you?" He said, "Comme ça, comme ça." They're true to form.

This is what happened on the way to work this morning. That Liberal chap, God help him.

Interjection.

Mr Pouliot: No, it wasn't you. That leaves 30-some-odd others.

He was chronologically driven by last night's news. If that Liberal had been in the 1960s, one day he would have been into whales, the next day he would have been with the environment, all this overshadowed by the picture of Che Guevara, wrapping himself in the Cuban flag, with no heat in the dead of winter because he would have proclaimed that he was boycotting oil companies.

You can trust the Liberals, I'll say this much. I will trust the Liberals, should they ever go back forming the government, that they will respect every Conservative promise. That you can take to the bank.

What do you make of a world under the scheme, the tax cut of the government, where you make \$25,000 a year — try to recall this in your previous life, Speaker, \$25,000 a year; that's about 12 bucks an hour — and you have a spouse and two children, but if you make \$250,000 a year, which is 10 times the \$25,000, of course, then you shall get not 10 times the tax break but you shall pocket 30 times the tax break?

While you do this, you give it to the people who least need it. Go to hospitalville, a couple of blocks from here, and there you shall see people in the corridors. You shall be refused admission to the emergency. It's to the point where the best way to visit Toronto is to get into an ambulance. It is that bad.

Unless your parents are rich, well-off, your daughter or your son will hardly ever have a chance to go to a university, because in order to satisfy the insatiable appetite of some — the most fortunate in this kind of winner-take-all lottery — you've had to cut education, you've had to cut health care.

The people in the township of Marathon are looking at their taxes going up because of the downloading. They're written to the accomplice, Mr Eves, Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance, whose responsibility it is to loosen the purse strings and to do it in fair fashion. Well, they haven't had a satisfactory response. I guess when the phone does not ring in Marathon, it is the government calling. They will try and try again. New Democrats would have. We did this. When we were the government, our first priority was to instill more fairness in our society. Times were difficult. You recall that. We went through a recession. But we closed ranks. We didn't make the rich richer.

When we say that it's the rich, it's the rich against us, we mean exactly that. Does it make any sense to you that if you are the chairperson of a large corporation or a bank president or an athlete making millions, the more you make, the more you keep? Money, percentage and otherwise — you can only eat one meal at a time, dress in one set of clothes and use one television at a time. You have to spread it around.

What my leader is saying is: "Beware of the disparity. Be careful. Look out for the middle class." It is being diluted, and for any 10 persons of the middle class who are no longer under that category, two will gravitate to the coattails of the well-to-do, of the rich, and eight will go downwards.

There is so much to say and yet so little time. When I began, I said it was with a great deal of pride that I get to share with my colleagues a few words on the opposition day motion. I would hope that common sense will prevail and that the members will see it within themselves to give support to the resolution put forward by Mr Hampton.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this. I had many things to say, but when the resolution was put forward I thought it was going to be debated in a manner that the NDP would have defended their position as well. What I found out immediately was that the attack was on the Liberals, that as soon as the Conservative Party had put forth their argument, the attack was on the Liberals.

What it's telling me is that the Liberals are on the right track. We are a great threat towards the representation of all people in Ontario. It seems to me that the alternative of having a compassionate government in place is the fact that the Liberals, in forming the next government, will of course represent all the people.

We're not fighting whether one is on the poor side or on the rich side. Any good government, if it wants to be judged as a good government, is one which represents all people, not one which only represents the poor or would represent the rich.

But let's take a look at what's happening here now. This present government, which came into power in 1995, first decided: "There is a deficit and there is a debt. We've got to find the money from somewhere, like all governments, or we can collect the taxes and redistribute them in a manner that is fair, especially for those who are the less fortunate in our society who need the help."

But this government went about taxing and beating up the poor, taking the money from the poor and giving it to the rich. Their argument, of course, is that it's much easier to do that, that if you take it away from the poor, they're not organized. By being not organized, they cannot lobby us, and they can easily cut 22% from the poorest in our society and then give it to the rich, or we have a tax break for the rich and then turn it back to the rich.

1700

What happened? Chaos broke out. What we had first was that people become homeless. There were no subsidies given to build affordable housing, so they cut that off. Hospitals started to suffer because of the great cutbacks. Nurses were being laid off. Chaos broke out.

You saw the great evidence in the House this week when my colleagues in the Liberal Party pointed out that people are dying in emergency. People are waiting for days to have operations, because no money was there. The Premier himself announced openly that there would be money flowing very quickly to arrest that situation. He actually talked about cutting back on the red tape that has not allowed things to work freely, but what has happened? It took them six months to bring the money forward to help in emergency care.

That was deliberate. It is a morbid attitude by a government that knew there are issues to be dealt with in the emergency, in hospitals, and took six months to flow

this money. I think some investigation should be done. They should call an investigation into that matter, as to why this money did not move quickly enough if the Premier had given that direction.

Who suffered? Those who cannot afford it in our system found that they were laid up in emergency. They could not afford to fly over to Buffalo to get attention, to get their health care concerns addressed. I think an investigation should be done into this.

Let me address the NDP on this aspect of it. Here are people who are very concerned about the poor. There's no doubt about that. They have done a wonderful job in some respects. But when they were in power, one expected somehow that they would have managed their affairs much better.

They completely threw out their bible, the collective bargaining agreement which they negotiated all along, and completely disregarded the things that were of great concern to those individuals. The unions were completely upset. They were betrayed by a government that should represent their concerns. What happened? The democratic process spoke very loudly: The people threw them out.

Of course, the benefit of it all came to the Conservatives. The people again thought that here could be a balance, a representation of all people, but immediately as this government came into power, they attacked the poor and they took the money from the poor and gave it to the rich. They have also given the rich a break. Then when the money needs to be redistributed for those to benefit, it's not coming.

What bothers us most about all this is the arrogance of this government and the manner in which it speaks about the poor: "The poor like to be poor; that's why they are poor." They have been denied access, they have been denied opportunities, they will be denied more education because education costs are going up. Only the rich will have access to education in the future.

Therefore, I would say to my colleagues that the true alternative is a government that can represent all people, one that understands that those who are most vulnerable in society must be looked after.

Of course we know that there is a deficit and a debt. We know we can't spend more than we have, because what happens is we create a great debt. This government, which prides itself on handling the fiscal policy of this province so well, has found itself in a greater debt situation than when they came in. The debt is larger, and it's like the greatest secret that ever happened. The debt is larger today, but they brag that the deficit is down. The fact is, you have a greater debt on your hands.

Who is paying for that? Our children. They will be taxing them. They will pay more in tuition fees. They will inherit a loan by the time they graduate of \$20,000 to \$25,000 on their heads for their first degree. They will be paying for the debt and the manner in which the government has handled the affairs of this province. But they brag about the responsibility and how fiscally responsible they are. I don't feel they have been that fiscally responsible. The fact is that they've pulled the

smokescreen over the eyes of the people, but people in our province are much wiser, much brighter and they see through the smokescreen.

As we look at this resolution, we see who the real, true representatives of the people are. It's the Liberal Party, which has said that we will not raise taxes. No matter what they say on both sides, our leader, Dalton McGuinty, made it very clear and many of our colleagues have made it very clear when they speak that there shall be no taxes increased in our time.

We will handle the money in a very fiscally responsible way and, furthermore, will make sure that those who need it get it and not those who don't. The rich can look after themselves and handle their affairs. They don't get the benefit of this great tax break, but we all benefit and continue to make this the greatest province in Canada to live in.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I'm pleased to join the debate with respect to the motion brought forth by the NDP.

What we're dealing with here is a motion that's dealing with the tax scheme put forth by the provincial government. I think what is fundamental with respect to this exercise is looking at not only the impact of this tax scheme but also the economic situation that is facing the province in terms of how it is operating today.

Everyone gets a tax cut but the percentage of the tax cut is greater for those with low or moderate incomes. Sixty-four per cent of the tax reduction, or \$2.9 billion, will go to the nearly three million middle-income taxpayers who earn between \$25,000 and \$75,000 in income.

As a result of the tax cut, the top 10% of Ontario's taxpayers will pay a greater portion of Ontario's personal income tax revenue, which is 45.9%, than they did before the cut, which was at 42.8%. The top 1% of Ontario taxpayers, those with individual incomes above \$177,000, will also pay a bigger share, which is 18.9% of Ontario's personal income tax revenue, compared to 16.7% before the cut.

What the members of the opposition are trying to spin and what they've been trying to carefully spin throughout our mandate is that a tax cut will result in people being made homeless, that it will result in cuts to fundamental services. They really don't understand that in terms of fiscal policy, what they did was run up the biggest debt in the province's history and they didn't fix any problems. This government has been put in power to fix government problems, and that's what we've been doing.

One of the areas we've been dealing with is health care, and health care spending when we came in was \$17.5 billion. Today, even with the tax cut that we've put forth, which not only has increased revenue into the coffers of the government, but we've also been spending \$1.2 billion more, we're spending annually \$18.7 billion towards health care.

That's been done notwithstanding what the federal Liberal government has done across this country in decreasing government health care funding in excess of \$7 billion. In particular to this province, health care and

social spending have been cut by the federal government to the tune of \$2.2 billion. That's \$2.2 billion that this province obviously could have used. But notwithstanding that, we have increased spending in the health care sector.

1710

I want to deal with my own local riding, which is Simcoe Centre, and in particular with Royal Victoria Hospital. The president of the hospital, Ted Long, commenting on the government's approach with respect to restructuring, is quoted in this article:

"Although some hospital administrators blame the deficit problem on the rapid-fire pace of the provincial restructuring of the health care system, Long has been vocal in his belief that, 'Restructuring was necessary to ensure the money goes where it is most needed.' His challenge has been to convince the province it's needed here," which is RVH, and in Barrie.

That's my challenge. I would say that there have been significant investments in not only my riding but all throughout Simcoe county. We've had investment of MRI equipment, kidney dialysis, breast screening and speech pathology, significant investments, in the millions and millions of dollars, to provide better health care to the citizens of Simcoe Centre.

The government's focus with respect to the spending of its dollars in terms of the health care sector — at this point in time we're spending \$18.7 billion. Making up that \$18.7 billion: the drug programs are \$1.2 billion, OHIP is \$5.3 billion, hospitals are \$6.8 billion, and other health care programs are \$5.5 billion.

This government has made a mandate in terms of not focusing its health care system on hospitals but also looking at home care and long-term-care investment. I think the recent investment in my riding of a nursing home, 120 new beds, an investment of \$10 million in this particular facility, is very good news. We have a significant shortage of long-term-care beds and we certainly applaud the government's measures with respect to the long-term-care investment that this government is going to make. We're looking at 546 new long-term-care beds in Simcoe county, which is great news because of the shortage. That's a significant investment by this government in that particular aspect of health care and we applaud it.

With respect to the revenues and our operating expenses, as I've commented, the deficit that was faced by this government when we took office was \$11.3 billion. That's the deficit. The debt was in excess of \$100 billion. In the balanced budget plan that we're pushing towards, the deficit target for 1998-99 was \$4.8 billion. It's been revised down and it's forecast for the 1998-99 period to be \$4.2 billion.

That certainly is a significant decrease, an \$11.3-billion deficit down to \$4.2 billion, but even with that, in the operating expenses for the government for the 1998-99 period we're looking at a public debt interest of \$9.2 billion. That's almost half of the spending that is put towards health care. Obviously, if we could get our books in order and our debt and start to pay down our debt,

you're going to see those public debt interest payments go down, and where that money would go, obviously, is not towards the banks and the financiers but towards government priorities.

That is very important in terms of how we spend the taxpayers' money. It's important that when we're dealing with tax cuts, what we're talking about is taxpayers' money. It's important that we fundamentally recognize in this government, aside from the opposition and aside from our federal Liberal counterparts, that we firmly believe that taxpayers' money, which is theirs, is better spent in their hands in terms of creating jobs, in terms of stimulating the economy.

Even with the tax cut, which we view as a stimulus to the economy, we've seen an increase in revenues. That's just solid proof that the tax approach is working in terms of having the economy grow and being able to support the important social programs that we want to provide. There's no other way you can go, because the bottom line is that if you have a tax-and-spend policy, like those of the two previous governments over the last 10 years, what it's going to result in is basically slowing the economy to a halt. Whereas in the previous government they were looking at something like 10,000 net new jobs over an entire mandate, this government, since we've taken power, has increased the number of net new jobs in excess of 400,000.

The Ontario economy is still growing and leads the country, notwithstanding what Paul Martin is trying to spin by saying: "We're in a little bit of trouble here. You're going to have to stay with us. This Asian flu is going to be bothering us, and we're going to have to put some controls over monetary policy." That's got to be a spin that just basically insults the intelligence of the average Canadian.

The bottom line is that the federal government is responsible for monetary policy. They're also responsible for dealing with other foreign governments in terms of dealing with that monetary policy, so who are they to say that we should be putting on brakes and dealing with restrictions on capital flow? They've been setting the policy since they've been in government, since 1993. This isn't something new. They're a part of the equation. So don't say, "Oh, we're going to have to look at what's happening out in the foreign sector and what we're going to have to deal with, the international problems out there." The bottom line is that the September employment figures show that 62,000 jobs were created in this province, which was 85% of all jobs created in Canada.

As I said, since our first throne speech in 1995, there have been more than 400,000 net new jobs created right here in Ontario. Our welfare rolls have dropped by 20,000 as more people have been employed during that last month, September, and we see the results of the fabulous growth right here in my riding. In Simcoe county there have been record numbers of new housing starts and expansion of industries like Honda, which created more than 1,200 direct new jobs. The average spinoff of an automobile sector job is four to one, so that's going to be

tremendous job creation within Simcoe county. It seems like a new business opens almost every day in the riding of Simcoe Centre.

Our government will continue to work hard to encourage business and commerce to come here to set up shop. Since we've been in power, that has basically been the theme: removing barriers to economic growth and to encourage investment in this province. That's the only way we're going to be able to have a strong, vibrant economy and create growth. Our government's plan is working and so are a lot more Ontarians, and that's good news.

The tax cut is fundamental in terms of that increasing revenue and putting forth a very sound economic platform in terms of people wanting to stay in this province. Certainly our economic growth compared to the rest of the country — as I said, in September, 85% of all the jobs were created right here in Ontario, and we've been leading this country for the last three years. It's also fundamental when you're dealing with the infrastructure. As you can see, throughout Ontario there's a lot of road construction going on, highways being repaved, new highways being built.

1720

The government is also taking initiatives with respect to rail in this province, in particular as a result of the federal government's legislation in 1996, which gave the green light for CN and CP to get out of the rail business where they felt it was not in their best interest. That's not even putting in a plan to allow communities such as mine, the city of Barrie, the town of Innisfil and the township of Bradford-West Gwillimbury, who fundamentally rely on the rail, on the Newmarket subdivision, which goes from Toronto right up to Bradford-West Gwillimbury, and then we have this line from Bradford-West Gwillimbury up to Barrie — it's slated by CN to be discontinued.

I'm very pleased to say that the province has taken an interest in this railway through the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission to look at acquiring that line in terms of negotiations with CN because it's fundamental to the infrastructure of Simcoe Centre in terms of economic growth, having a very competitive infrastructure, and providing an option in terms of not travelling down and up Highway 400.

I'm very pleased to be a part of this process and I think, once we maintain the track, we'll also be looking at hopefully convincing GO Transit or some operator to provide a rail service obviously for passenger and perhaps freight. I think it will be a tremendous boon to tourism in Simcoe Centre because Simcoe Centre, as everyone knows, is one of the best places to live in this entire province, one of the greatest waterfronts you can possibly have. They spent over \$35 million on that waterfront and, I can tell you, it's a great place to live, a great tourism area. I'm very pleased to see that an initiative is being taken. The acquisition of that rail line is fundamental to the growth of my area, so I support it wholeheartedly.

That's one of the things, when we look in terms of paying down the deficit and balancing our books and also paying down the debt, that give the government more

flexibility to deal with its priorities of the day, because if you're not paying out debt interest payments — and as I said, in 1998-99 the debt interest payments of this government are \$9.2 billion. That's a lot of money being put out there. At the same time, we have the federal government reducing our transfer payments by \$2.2 billion. All that money could be going towards government priorities. I think it would be in the best interests of our taxpayers to make sure we get that debt and the deficit under control.

But I believe the programs with respect to the tax cut scheme have borne fruit, because we have increased our revenues. We are seeing job creation in this province. We are seeing that we have the lowest marginal tax rate throughout the country. Just look at the performance of other governments. British Columbia is in very, very poor economic shape. There isn't a province out there that is near the economic performance of this province, and that's fundamental with respect to how we've gone about creating a very positive economic climate. But you have to put money into the stakeholders, who are the taxpayers. It's their money. It shouldn't be the government taking that money from them and saying, "We'll determine how we want to spend your money." That's the federal government's approach. I don't agree with it, and I think a lot of average Canadians don't agree with it, because we are taxed so heavily.

I fundamentally support the tax plan of this government. I think it is sound fiscal policy, and I also think it has been in the best interests of taxpayers to have that money in their pockets.

Mr Bradley: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on yet another trick resolution from my good friends to the left, who have a knack — I want to compliment them. They should pay overtime to their staff who think of these resolutions to put forward in the Legislature with a hook in them. It reminds me of the government. They would agree with me on this. The government puts something in each bill so that if it's maybe a pretty popular bill, the opposition will vote against it. It's what I call a hostage. There's always a hostage in there. It'll be a bill that will be popular; let's say a bill that would do something really good for Ontario. Then they put one little segment in it that they know the opposition could not possibly agree with. That's what they do.

I know how difficult the NDP had it when they were in government. I appreciate it. I've been in government; I know how difficult it is. My good friend from Welland-Thorold campaigned so hard on public auto insurance, as did his predecessor Mel Swart, who along with Thelma celebrated — at least the group gathered. The celebration's actually on October 29, but the group gathered for their 60th wedding anniversary on the weekend. I know he was in favour of public auto insurance, but when it came to government, unfortunately the NDP decided it wasn't possible to implement it. Now, I'm not criticizing them. I understand how difficult it can be.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Listen, all I'm saying is, I understand how difficult those things can be. When I hear them talk

about tax cuts, my gosh, I turned on the television set the other day and I heard the Premier of British Columbia saying he's going to have some tax cuts now for his province. I must say I was surprised. I think maybe in Saskatchewan in their last budget they had some tax cuts. So we're seeing those kinds of tax cuts.

I look at the resolution today and it's not about tax cuts. I see the difficulty that one faces and I know that we have difficult times meeting these obligations.

I happen to think we had a rather interesting episode today. Here's where the NDP will agree with me. We had Premier Harris last weekend say at the convention, after his government had suffered the criticism last week over hospital emergency wards being clogged and ambulances having to head all over Toronto — my friend Bud Wildman said that if you wanted a good tour of Toronto, the best way to get it was to get in an ambulance, because they had to tour all over Toronto to find a hospital. I happen to agree that was the case.

The Premier this weekend said: "I didn't know this money wasn't flowing. I'm going to get to the bottom of this. What the heck has the health minister been doing? What the heck has the bureaucracy been doing?" So he pointed his fingers in 10 different directions and then all of a sudden the money was moving, even though it was his own Management Board and we know the Premier has great influence on Management Board.

Even if we know that the Premier knew all along this money wasn't flowing, he pretended he didn't know that it wasn't flowing, and some people — certainly not the overwhelming majority — in the news media seemed to believe this, because they had the cameras going. The cameras headed down to Mount Sinai Hospital with the cheque being given out, and I know that probably the editor at the end of the story cut off the part that said, "Mike Harris really knew that this money wasn't flowing."

What happened was, it was another farce. It was similar to Mike Harris saying that the Minister of the Environment should be bringing in his new program for clean air. We know where the program's blocked. It's blocked by the Premier's office. That's where it's always blocked, but you can't fool the news media. They are going to see through this. They're going to be doing their stories three and four days down the line and they are going to understand, because they know the system well, that this was all a phony charade and the Premier knew exactly what he was doing and he was the one blocking that money.

To go back to my friends from the NDP, I worry, I want to say to my friend from London Centre, when I hear them agreeing with and cheering along with the other side. She must agree with me secretly, I think, that when they are on that side, it's difficult. I was going to tell Buzz Hargrove about this, because Buzz doesn't like those people. That's what Premier Harris said on the weekend. He said, "The enemy is those big, bad unions." That's what Mr Harris said, when of course this has done everything it wanted to do anyway, with its majority in the

House and with the change in rules, regardless of what any labour union had to say.

1730

But I know that Buzz and Bob White must both be beside themselves when they hear this banter back and forth between the Conservatives and the NDP. Buzz's new book called *Labour of Love* — I should give him some advertising — is being launched tonight. "Labour of Love," it says, and it's in Yorkville. Politicians are not now invited to this. It's strictly for labour; it's not for the politicians. But I want to say I'm going to be interested in Buzz's book —

Mr Baird: With a forward by Dalton McGuinty.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean.

Mr Bradley: — because I will want to see whether or not Buzz would like the NDP and the Conservatives always seemingly on the same side and making speeches on the same side. That doesn't always happen.

My friends in the NDP, I'm just having some fun with them, because they're fine people, I'm sure, and I know the situation. They believe that they must get votes from the Liberals. I tell them they should worry that what's happening in some cases is those votes are going from the NDP to the Conservatives, to the Reform Party. Remember Oshawa, the huge number of votes that went from the NDP to the Reform in Oshawa. That's what I think they should be worrying about. I think Buzz Hargrove knows that. I think Bob White knows that. I think the leadership of the trade union movement in their heart of hearts know that the return of this government to power, if you thought the first round was bad, you should see what's coming in the second round.

I recall as well — and times are difficult — there was a demonstration when my friends in the NDP were in power, about 3,000 people out there representing the developmentally disabled. They were protesting against the NDP government of Bob Rae. I explained to some of the people that the Bob Rae government didn't want to make those kinds of cuts or not provide the funding that was needed, that they were in some very difficult economic times.

But times have changed. The American economy is booming, and now we find with the American economy booming that revenues are coming in, despite the tax cut, despite the fact that this government gets its money from the federal government and then gives it away in a tax cut. It doesn't spend it on health, doesn't spend it on education; it gets its transfer payments and says, "Here, folks, have a tax cut." I tell you, that is why people are not sympathetic.

The Premier today was back to his old ways. When he was answering in the House today, members will know, he said: "Listen, there's enough money in the system. What's wrong is it's not being spent correctly." That's what he said a few years ago when he was cheering the federal government on, saying to Brian Mulroney, "Please cut more," saying to John Chrétien, "Please cut more." So said Mike Harris. Now he's back to that today. He says there's enough money in the system, it's just that the

people who run those hospitals squander the money. That's of course a silly argument.

I know and I think a lot of people know that this government is trying to have its budget balanced next year, not this year. The Provincial Auditor already caught them trying to shove money into a different year. If they wanted to, we could see a balanced budget this year. Next year, again with that booming American economy and all of the trade that's done with the United States, far more trade than ever in our history, we're going to see an offshoot into Ontario of that, and they can thank the Clinton administration for the fine economy that we have here in the province of Ontario. I know they'll be sending a letter —

Mr Ford: Talk to British Columbia, Jim.

Mr Bradley: The member mentions British Columbia. I don't know why I'm going to defend the NDP, but I am. The NDP government of British Columbia must trade with the Far East mostly, and so when there's a recession there, we see a downturn in the British Columbia trade. But in Ontario we trade with the US overwhelmingly and therefore we have all these revenues coming in. So there will be funding available to be invested in education and health care and other areas of endeavour.

One last place I can tell you it will come from is that health tax. Do you ever hear the Tories mention that health tax? They don't mention that. When you fill out your income tax —

Mr Galt: That's one you brought in.

Mr Bradley: No, no.

Mr Galt: The one that you brought in in the late 1980s.

Mr Bradley: The government brought in this health tax. They called it the fair health tax — they always have the word "fair" in there — health tax for everybody, and of course there are revenues coming in from that tax.

I understand what is happening here. I know my friends in the NDP who were critical of us today didn't want to bring in the social contract and tear up every collective agreement in Ontario. They didn't want to make cuts to municipalities and the transfer agencies such as hospitals.

Mr Pouliot: We can see through that style, Jim.

Mr Bradley: I'm saying, in your heart you didn't want to do it, and I knew that. I know you didn't want to raise tuition for those students by some 40%. You didn't want to do it. I know the government in British Columbia of Dave Barrett, the NDP government in Manitoba, the NDP government in Saskatchewan with Allan Blakeney, they all had back-to-work legislation or anti-labour legislation they didn't want to bring in. I know they didn't want to bring it in and I sympathize with them.

What I'm saying is I know why this resolution is before the House this afternoon. I understand it. I agree with the part that says, for instance, we have to invest money in the health care field. There's no question about that. I think you'd see a consensus among the people who are opposed to this government in that regard.

I know that despite the fact the NDP raised several taxes for the wealthiest people in our society when they

were in power, that didn't bring in the revenues that they had hoped for. That simply did not bring in those revenues. They meant well by it perhaps, but it didn't bring in the revenues.

Mr Wildman: What about the tire tax?

Mr Bradley: Unfortunately, my time is up and I must now yield.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Algoma.

Mr Wildman: I will speak very briefly. I want to make the point that my leader's resolution here is very critical of the Conservative agenda. It states very clearly our disagreement as New Democrats with the Conservative agenda. We understand that the Harris Tories believe, I think, that if they can cut taxes to the wealthiest people in this province and transfer wealth from the poorest to the wealthiest, those people will spend the money in Ontario, they hope, and that will stimulate the economy and produce jobs. That's their belief. The problem with it of course is there's no guarantee they will spend the money in Ontario — they may spend it anywhere — but that's what they believe, and in order to do that they are prepared to see major cuts to health care, to education, particularly to environmental protection, and to other important community services.

That is the Conservative agenda and our leader is saying we don't agree with that. We believe that the wealthiest in our society should contribute to a reinvestment in those services that have made Ontario a good place to live. We believe that people who make \$80,000 or more individually should be assisted by the government to reinvest in health care, in education, in community services and environmental protection that will benefit the whole of our society and stimulate our economy and growth and development in Ontario. That's our major difference and that is quite clear. We're saying that those people should be assisted in reinvesting; the Tories say they shouldn't. So it's quite clear there's a difference of opinion between us and the Conservatives, a fundamental disagreement.

This resolution today gives all members an opportunity to express their views and to vote to demonstrate where they come down, on which side of that disagreement. They either come down in favour of tax cuts and a transfer of wealth from the poorest to the wealthy, or they don't. They either come down in favour of cuts to education, health care and environmental protection and community services, or they don't.

We will come down squarely in favour of protecting those services for the benefit of our society and ensuring that the wealthiest people in our society, who by definition do not need assistance, do not need more money, help to reinvest in services that will benefit the most vulnerable and the poorest in our society.

When it comes to a vote, I hope all members who believe in a progressive society will vote against the Conservative agenda and in favour of my leader's resolution.

1740

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): I open my comments with a small quote I found in a book. The quote

reads, "Real wealth is being able to afford a family and the government in one salary cheque." The irony of that quote is that it was in the Farmer's Almanac for the year of our Lord 1985 for Canada and the United States. It's a telling point, because it seemed that things got worse since then, not better.

When the opposition talks about the sharing of wealth in our province from the wealthier families to the lower-income families, I sometimes am reminded that what they wanted to do — and I think the member for St Catharines explained it fairly succinctly when he said they tried to tax the higher incomes and they didn't get more money. They want to punish the higher-income earners. They follow The Communist Manifesto, practically, that says you must distribute all wealth equally entirely across society. It doesn't work. It has been tried, and it doesn't work. Look at the socialist countries in Europe, in Asia and in other parts of the world.

The reality, in hard numbers, of this income tax cut is this: Let's take two examples, one being a couple with two children and one earner with an employment income of \$25,000 per year. Before the Ontario tax cut, they paid \$515 of Ontario tax. After the full reduction of the rate cut, they have a net tax payable of zero, and cumulatively, if you add up the amount of money that was reduced over the four years that we have implemented this tax cut, \$20 for 1996, \$255 for 1997, \$380 for 1998. These are the savings of taxes they have experienced. When the first full year of the 30% tax cut is implemented, in 1999, there will be an additional \$340, for a total cumulative Ontario tax savings of \$995.

The members say that \$995 buys nothing but a coffee cup. I'm sorry, but to the people out there who earn \$25,000 a year, \$995 is an important amount of money. It can buy you a refrigerator.

Mr Christopherson: Could you buy a hospital with it? Is it enough to buy a school with it? Going to buy an environment with it?

Mr Spina: This is personal income, not government income.

Let's look at a typical middle-income earner, a couple with two children and a family income of \$60,000 from two earners. This is their taxpayers' dollars: Before the Ontario tax cuts, they paid \$4,605 per year; at the end of the full income tax reduction, they will pay \$3,210, a cumulative reduction of \$3,500 over those four years. That \$3,500 is money that can be used to clothe children.

I leave you with this closing comment. It's a quote that was made on September 22, 1996. "When talking about fiscal responsibility, one element is to make cuts, to find greater efficiencies in government, to make government more efficient generally. That is what Mike Harris is doing." The person who gave us that quote was none other than Dalton McGuinty in the Ottawa leadership debate on September 22, 1996. I rest my case. We are doing the right thing.

Mr Gerretsen: It's tough to follow that act because whether that quote is accurate or not, the point still is —

Mr Guzzo: You were there.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau.

Mr Gerretsen: The point still is that the government showed its incompetence again today, when we were talking about health care, with the fact that it now has to rush around to all sorts of hospitals all over this province giving money that was meant for emergency care that should have been paid six months ago, and where we saw the last weekend here in Toronto itself 17 of the 19 emergency wards of the various hospitals were closed down. I think that's an absolutely pathetic situation.

This government is closing 35 hospitals and is telling the local people in those communities, "We're closing your hospitals but we're making the other institutions more efficient and we're also making sure that we're going to reinvest enough money so that there's enough money for community care access." That's what they're saying, and what are they doing? In my community they have closed the Hotel Dieu Hospital, and a court just confirmed that yesterday, but at the same time they've also cut off 2,000 patients from the community care access they've been receiving over the last number of years.

Last night I had a number of examples such as a 90-year-old woman who had received community access care for the last three or four years and, all of a sudden, it was unilaterally cut off, and a number of other people who are in similar positions like that as well. How about the 89-year-old who suffers from Alzheimer's, lives with her family and has received for seven years three hours of care per week by an outside individual. She has been cut back to three hours for every two weeks. Or how about a couple who are trying to keep a 79-year-old mother at home who's legally blind and has been cut off from all home care whatsoever.

The question is legitimate: How are you going to pay for all this? I think it's very interesting. The government, in its own news release on September 28 said — this is the government's own release — Ernie Eves, the Minister of Finance who still hasn't got the property tax situation and appeal situation settled in this province, which is hurting small businesses in this province on a day-to-day basis because these people were told, as you may recall, that they would have the right to appeal their assessment before October 31 and the bill still hasn't come back —

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean.

Mr Gerretsen: Anyway, that minister, all of a sudden on September 28, said, "Lo and behold, we've got \$4.1 billion more in revenue" than his own projections indicated. That tells me something. It tells me that sometime within the next year or so this government is going to make a major announcement that it's going to balance its budget a heck of a lot sooner because there's all sorts of money hidden in the various budgets.

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: No, no. Here, look. There's \$4.1 billion.

Mr Christopherson: There is a surplus.

Mr Gerretsen: Well, they've taken \$4.1 billion this year more than they anticipated.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau.

Mr Gerretsen: That's a darn good place to start in order to get some of the money back into health care and into the educational infrastructure of this province. We all know that tax cuts simply aren't in.

Mr Christopherson: That's where the \$4 billion came from.

The Acting Speaker: Hamilton Centre.

Mr Gerretsen: That \$4 billion is extra revenue that the government did not anticipate in its budgetary documentation this year. We know that.

The other interesting one is the fact that the government has been saying, "We've created over 400,000 new jobs," since they've got to office. Read your own material. Since September 1995 your own document says it's only 302,000 net new jobs, which is much less than the projection of 725,000 jobs.

1750

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm glad to have the opportunity to enter this debate and I guess to conclude this debate. I just want to say that I'm very glad we brought forward this resolution under the name of our leader, Howard Hampton. It's high time the positions of the three parties in this House were very clearly on the record for all Ontarians to see. This is a debate about numbers, about money, but it's fundamentally about commitment, the kind of commitment we have to our health care system and to our education system in particular, and to the many other services Ontarians want.

Let me give you just a few numbers. We could talk all day about numbers, but let me give you a few numbers that I think are quite relevant. When you look at the tax cut that the Harris government has implemented — and I understand why, from their perspective, they want to defend the tax cut. As a New Democratic Party we are very clearly against what they're doing, but at least we understand that they're clearly on the side they are.

Sixty per cent of taxpayers in the province make less than \$38,000. The vast majority of Ontarians make less than \$38,000. That large majority of Ontarians gets 26% of the value of the tax cut. If you look at the other end of the scale, you have 6% of taxpayers who make more than \$80,000, yet that small 6% get the same amount of the tax cut, 26%, as do the vast majority, that 60% at the bottom end. That's the kind of justice the Tory caucus and the Tory government of Mike Harris believes in, taking from the middle class and the poor and the working class and giving to the rich. That's very clearly what they're about and they make no bones about the fact that's where they stand. They don't like it when we remind them, but that's where they are.

Our commitment to education, to health care, to the services we want to provide needs to be there in more than just words, because when we look at our Liberal colleagues to our right, they, like us, say they are against the tax cut; they, like us, say they are in favour of putting more money into health care and into education, except when you get to the fundamental question about connec-

ting that commitment of words to the real commitment of money. One doesn't work without the other. You can't say, "We want to put more money into health care. We want to put more money into education. We want to put back the cuts that Mike Harris has driven home in each of those vital services," and pretend, as our Liberal colleagues want to pretend, that the money is just going to flow from somewhere. It's the kind of voodoo economics that just will not work.

Just listening to the debate today, I certainly have had and I know my other colleagues in the New Democratic Party caucus have had complete confirmation of how uncomfortable many of our Liberal colleagues are in the position their leader has taken on this. Because many of them understand — and we saw that reflected by some of them attacking us, dredging up everything they could dream of that people might not have liked about the former NDP government; or on the other hand being a little wiser, as some of them have done, and just actually staying quiet on the issue, which as I say is a little bit wiser, because who knows what might happen to the positions they have taken so far? That's where they are today; I don't know where they're going to be tomorrow.

The fundamental problem with the position our Liberal colleagues have taken is that you can't put together a commitment to education and to health care and not be prepared to reinvest. You can't reinvest unless you're prepared to tell the taxpayers of Ontario where that money is going to come from. It's not going to just drop from the sky. Or are they suggesting, our Liberal colleagues, that in fact it's going to come from the very cuts that they are criticizing, or want to be seen as criticizing, the Harris government for implementing?

I just want to say this: We, as a party, are being very clear in what we are saying. We say that we are completely against what Mike Harris is doing to our health care system and to our education system, and we acknowledge that to that limit, to that extent, our Liberal colleagues are saying very similar things, but then the fundamental parting takes place.

Mr Agostino: We are not going to raise taxes.

The Acting Speaker: Hamilton East.

Mr Silipo: If the Liberal Party is afraid to say that they would take back that portion of the tax cut that goes to the top 6% of taxpayers, that would generate back into the public coffers the \$1.5 billion that we would need to reinvest into education, into health care, into many of our other services, then let them defend that position. But let them at least be clear and honest about that position.

Something tells me that the level of discomfort that we've seen in them today is a good sign that many of them don't like that position, but that's the position they've taken. We, on the other hand, believe in investing and in telling the taxpayers of the province where that money is going to come from.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Hampton has moved opposition day number 2. Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1757 to 1802.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles	Lankin, Frances
Boyd, Marion	Lessard, Wayne
Christopherson, David	Marchese, Rosario
Churley, Marilyn	Martel, Shelley
Hampton, Howard	Martin, Tony
Kormos, Peter	Morin, Blain K.

Pouliot, Gilles
Silipo, Tony
Wildman, Bud
Wood, Len

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Froese, Tom
Baird, John R.	Galt, Doug
Barrett, Toby	Gerretsen, John
Bassett, Isabel	Gilchrist, Steve
Beaubien, Marcel	Grimmett, Bill
Boushy, Dave	Guzzo, Garry J.
Brown, Jim	Hamick, Charles
Brown, Michael A.	Harris, Michael D.
Carroll, Jack	Hodgson, Chris
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron
Cleary, John C.	Johnson, Bert
Crozier, Bruce	Johnson, David
Cunningham, Dianne	Jordan, W. Leo
Curling, Alvin	Kells, Morley

Patten, Richard
Pettit, Trevor
Preston, Peter
Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Ross, Lillian
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Saunderson, William
Sheehan, Frank
Smith, Bruce
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Tascona, Joseph N.

Danford, Harry
DeFaria, Carl
Doyle, Ed
Elliott, Brenda
Eves, Ernie L.
Fisher, Barbara
Ford, Douglas B.
Fox, Gary

Klees, Frank
Leach, Al
Marland, Margaret
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Parker, John L.

Tilson, David
Turnbull, David
Vankoughnet, Bill
Villeneuve, Noble
Wilson, Jim
Wood, Bob
Young, Terence H.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 16, the nays are 65.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): The member for York South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Health concerning government cutbacks in emergency room funding. He is obviously not here —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, order. It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1808.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Second Session, 36th Parliament

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Deuxième session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 20 October 1998

Mardi 20 octobre 1998



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 20 October 1998

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 20 octobre 1998

The House met at 1830.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Quorum, please.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Could you check and see if there's a quorum.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LEGAL AID SERVICES ACT, 1998

LOI DE 1998

SUR LES SERVICES D'AIDE JURIDIQUE

Resuming the adjourned debated on the motion for second reading of Bill 68, An Act to incorporate Legal Aid Ontario and to create the framework for the provision of legal aid services in Ontario, to amend the Legal Aid Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 68, Loi constituant en personne morale Aide juridique Ontario, établissant le cadre de la prestation des services d'aide juridique en Ontario, modifiant la Loi sur l'aide juridique et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I'm pleased to rise in my place tonight to talk about legal aid, about why maybe this government might require legal aid. This government should be brought up on charges of being uncaring of the people of Ontario. That's a good reason to have a legal aid system in this province, because I think they would need all the money in the world to try to defend their actions and inactions upon the people of Ontario in the last little while.

They'd be charged as a government that really doesn't know how to manage any more. We've seen that every day in question period in regard to the health care system, in regard to emergency wards, in regard to education, property taxes, downloading. They can be charged with those crimes and would certainly need a good legal aid system to try to defend them, but I don't think the Ontario public will want to defend them.

Quite frankly, I am offended by the disaster in our medical system, especially our medical care and chronic care system. It is in a shambles. While the Premier was trying to bring up past examples of inequities in the

system, I have never seen a system in such disarray as this one. It's very easy to demolish a house. Certainly this government's *raison d'être* was to come in and dismantle everything. Anybody could do that, but to rebuild it with intelligence, with vigour and with caring is another challenge, a challenge that this government has failed.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Thank you very much.

Mr Ramsay: This government has failed that challenge, Judge, no doubt about it, and they should be charged with that irresponsibility.

That people are floating around our cities looking for emergency ward beds and ending up dying in ambulances is a charge that should be brought against every member of the government side of this Legislature. It's disgusting what's going on here, all to finance a tax cut for the very rich of this province. It's absolutely disgusting that we live in an Ontario where the health care system is going down the tubes. You folks had better do something about it. I'll tell you, the message is going to go to voters right across this province that our party is going to be doing that for sure. We've got to make sure that the health care system in a province as rich and as affluent as ours —

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The member seems to be engaging in a general rant against the government, which at other times and places might be appropriate. The topic of this debate is Bill 68, the Legal Aid Services Act. I haven't even heard the word mentioned yet.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): I think the member has a point. I'd ask the member for Timiskaming to come back to the subject at hand.

Mr Ramsay: I have mentioned legal aid, actually, about four times if you check Hansard for the first four minutes of my speech so far. I'm saying that this government requires legal aid to handle the mess they could be charged with for all their deficiencies in governing this province. Emergency services were just one of those areas I was talking about.

I'd like to get into the problem that was happening here, the lack of management on the part of this government. Actually, I don't think it was lack of management. In fact, I think this government was seriously considering a fall election. They thought the announcement in April could be reannounced place by place, town by town and hospital by hospital this fall if they had chosen to take that window of opportunity. I think that's what was going to happen, and they just forgot when they decided they were no longer going to have a fall election. They forgot about

the April announcement that emergency care had to be patched up.

I think that's what happened with this government. They forgot their management, because the idea was to manage all the announcements during a fall election campaign that didn't happen because everything else was going to pot, like property taxes. They just didn't expect what was going to happen when the municipalities finally grappled with all the information, the weekly changes of information they have all been receiving since January. I spoke to clerk-treasurers right across this province — I was a clerk-treasurer for 10 years before I came here — and it was unbelievable the lack of information and the changing information they had.

That's why this government would need a legal aid program, to defend themselves from the charges brought forward against them for the absolute incompetence and mismanagement of all these issues across the province.

Mr Guzzo: Is that true for all municipalities?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau, come to order.

Mr Ramsay: The member for Ottawa-Rideau is heckling, asking, "Is that true for all municipalities?" It was the Harris government that brought these changes —

Mr Guzzo: Not the ones where they're competently led.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau, please come to order. Member for Timiskaming, I would appreciate it if you could come back to the bill at hand.

Mr Ramsay: That's why I think legal aid is important in Ontario, to bring this legislation in, because of all the mismanagement and incompetence of this government. The member for Ottawa-Rideau asked, "Is it true that all the municipalities brought in these tax changes?" Most municipalities brought in the tax changes as ordered by Harris government legislation; the whole assessment system of properties was changed across the province. Then, coupled with that, which added to the things they could be charged with and therefore require legal aid, was the downloading to the municipalities. Costs increased for many municipalities, in fact most municipalities —

Mr Tilson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The member continues to go on, and these matters wouldn't even be covered by legal aid. He knows that. He's using this as an opportunity to go on a rant against the government, and it's a most inappropriate time to do that —

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat. The member for Dufferin-Peel does have a point. I would ask the member for Timiskaming to discuss the bill at hand tonight, which is the legal aid bill. I'm afraid it's just not quite good enough that you keep mentioning that the government might need it. You must talk, at times anyway, about the bill at hand.

Mr Ramsay: Madam Speaker, I'm trying to tie in the issue of legal aid to what I want to say tonight, the things on top of the mind of the constituents I represent in Timiskaming or northern Ontario. I want to take the opportunity to express the views of my constituents, and I guard that right.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): David, if someone wants to appeal their property taxes, can they get legal aid?

Mr Ramsay: That's a very good point from the member for Welland-Thorold. Let's talk about property taxes and the right to appeal them. The government through this bill has narrowed the issues on which the citizenry can apply for legal aid. In some of the complications people have with their property tax assessments — people who have multiple properties, residential properties, are coming before an assessment board, eventually, if the government gets its act in order with this — legal aid may be one of the tools they might be able to take advantage of to present their case, because some of these cases are very complicated.

Mr Tilson: That's not what legal aid is for.

The Acting Speaker: Will the member for Dufferin-Peel come to order.

1840

Mr Ramsay: What had happened in this regard and why these people might find themselves in a position where they might have to call upon legal aid is that in the rush to judgment the government took to absolutely cause a revolution in the property tax situation, this was done without the assistance of the clerks and treasurers association or the Ontario assessors association, which had offered and volunteered to this government their assistance in order to do this properly because, yes, there certainly were some deficiencies across the board with this situation, but what they said was that to do it properly and to do it right, you had to take the time. This government refused to do that, and so now we have certainly a backlog in this court, if you will, a different type of court — an assessment court, if you will — where people are going to have to appeal their property tax assessments.

As I said, this is coupled with, in some cases, the doubling and tripling of property taxes. That's why they would require that sort of legal aid system, so that they could get involved in making the case why their property had been inappropriately, number one, assessed and, number two, taxed.

An issue that has caused this problem, of course, is downloading of such essential, across-the-board Ontario issues as ambulance service.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I think it's important for the people of Ontario to be reminded that there is a process in place to appeal their assessment and it is not legal aid —

The Acting Speaker: Member for York-Mackenzie, take your seat.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): This is as relevant as his speech.

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat. I'm following the rules here, Attorney General. You can't stand to correct somebody's record, so please take your seat. Continue.

Mr Ramsay: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Legal Aid Ontario corporation that we're talking about here could be used, I would think, by a lot of these people who

are finding that they have a lot of disagreement with these issues with the Harris government. That's a point I certainly wanted to make, and I appreciate the member bringing that to my attention.

Services such as ambulance services that as a Liberal I believe are Ontario-wide services should not be the responsibility of the municipalities, and for the very reason that municipalities across Ontario have varying degrees of wealth. I'm very sensitive to that, coming from northern Ontario, very sensitive to that, having lived almost half my life in southern Ontario in a very affluent municipality. I know, having lived in both areas of the province, the divergence of the affluence of our municipalities. To place a service such as ambulance service with the municipalities is absolutely wrong.

What is going to happen in the next few years with the increase of taxes, especially on small business, as we've seen, is that small business people and others in the community are going to come to the council table rather than rallying outside of Queen's Park, and what they are going to say to those councillors is: "You know, I'm not sure that in Left Wishbone municipality of Ontario we can actually afford to sustain 24-hour ambulance service. Maybe we should have it on call from 6 in the evening to 6 in the morning."

That's where you're going to start to get the divergence of services across the province. I think that's wrong. On basic services such as health, that's absolutely wrong. That would be a case where somebody might want to go to legal aid to make a case against this government, to sue this government for dereliction of duty. I think that's why you'd want to look for legal aid.

I was looking at a clipping the other day in the Northern Daily News, the Kirkland Lake daily paper. The town council in Kirkland Lake is very upset with the new assessment system. What's interesting is that for small business people, small landlords who might have a commercial enterprise downstairs on the main street, Government Road in Kirkland Lake, if that business was vacated after October 1, it would be 15 months before that landlord would be able to get any assessment relief from the province. Therefore, that landlord would be paying very high taxes on a vacant building, not generating any revenue at all. That is absolutely wrong and irresponsible to small business across Ontario, small business that is the sector of the economy that's generating all the jobs.

What is this government, which I thought was very interested in creating jobs, as we all are here, doing? Absolutely socking it terribly to the small business community in this province through the property tax system and the assessment system, and that's wrong.

Further down on Government Road in Kirkland Lake we've got the mining recorder's office. In that we've had a great reduction in services. I could see mining prospectors wanting to go to legal aid to make charges against this government, to help fund that charge — those cuts to the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines have really hurt their ability to discover new wealth in this province — because they can't get the maps they need. They can't get the files they need. They can't get the timely help and

the expertise they used to be able to get on the phone from the folks in Sudbury. As a matter of fact, one of the officials in the ministry from Sudbury had said that they are now getting their people to train at night to try to get up to speed with the other areas of the ministry because they've had to fire a lot of the experts in the other fields. So now they've got generalists trying to answer a lot of specific questions being asked by mining prospectors and developers.

All the way along people are being hurt in this province by this government. A very good reason why a good legal aid bill should be there is so that people can access that so they can go after this government for all the deficiencies they have.

We haven't even talked, Madam Speaker, about education tonight. I think you're aware, as all members of the Legislature are aware, of the tremendous turmoil that has happened in the education system. The last few weeks I've been in the riding and I've been touring our schools, and I can't believe the level of morale in our schools, an institution that should be just so enthusiastic and energetic about the future of our young people, because it's our young people in our schools that are the future of this country. I just can't believe the terrible low morale that's there.

Why is that? It's caused by the Harris government, by the abrupt changes which the Harris government forced upon the school system, the education system, without any consultation at all with the people who know: the front-line workers, the teachers and the trustees and all the other educators in the system.

In a democracy, the government certainly has a right to set goals and to set targets. That's your duly won right for sure. But just because we have a majority government there doesn't give you the right to dictate to the people of Ontario for four years. I think that's the fatal and tragic mistake you've made. You feel that because you have a mandate you can absolutely dictate to the people of Ontario how everything should change and all the minutiae of change. That is wrong. You still have to work in partnership with people.

When I talk to municipal officials throughout northern Ontario, that's the greatest sense of loss they have with this government, that for some reason now there's no sense of partnership any longer with the Ontario government. In the past they would say: "When we had a dispute with the government, we always knew we could come down to Queen's Park, we could get a meeting with the deputy minister or a minister, and usually we could work things out. Not that we always got things our own way," the municipalities would say, "but at least we could get some sort of accommodation. Or even in the case where we didn't maybe get our way, we knew there was a sense of partnership between the province and the municipality." Now there isn't. It's, "My way or the doorway." If you don't do it the Harris government way, that's it.

We're forcing amalgamations. We're forcing DSSABs. We're forcing area services boards in the north. This is the type of dictatorial government that we're facing. No

wonder people are crying for a better legal aid bill. It's in order to get the revenue to go after this government, to defend themselves in court when they feel they're being attacked by this government, or to charge this government for irresponsible action. That's why they're doing that.

In my area of northern Ontario we have a severe doctor shortage situation. Part of that situation has been caused by the competitive nature of the programs that have been placed out there. I've got one community, Englehart, that has seven or fewer doctors. Therefore, they can avail themselves of a program where doctors can come in and take a salary. But in Kirkland Lake, 40 miles up the road, they cannot avail themselves of that program. So what have we got? We've got a doctor from Kirkland Lake and a doctor from the Tri-town leaving those areas, going to Englehart and setting up practice. Now we've got patients driving up and down Highway 11, going to this town that's got the sweeter deal for their doctors. That just doesn't make sense. Within a catchment area of 40 to 50 miles each side of this town of Englehart we've now got patients driving up and down the highway. It just doesn't make sense. Talk about a lack of common sense. This government lacks it in spades. It's wrong. It's absolutely dead wrong.

1850

I would say to this government that if they ever think they've got a chance of getting re-elected, they had better start, in the next six to eight months or whenever they're going to call this next contest, to correct these problems. I think that's why they didn't go for a fall election. I think they were planning to go for a fall election and then all hell started to break loose. That's what started to happen both in health care and property taxes, in doctor shortages and all the downloading. It's just not working because you went at it far too fast and far too deep.

While a lot of people in the province of Ontario understood that change had to happen, I don't believe they're embracing your approach to making that change happen. I think the next few months are going to be very telling for the future of this government, to see how you respond to this. We've been pushing this government to respond to emergency care in the last few days. Maybe we got the Premier a little motivated now. He actually went out to a hospital and delivered a cheque. That's a good start. There are still a lot of hospitals around Ontario that need their cheques so that we can present the very best health care for the people of Ontario. I suggest you start to do that, government.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I should say to the member for Timiskaming that much of what he spoke about today certainly wouldn't find any disagreement from us. We find a certain irony, of course, in the member for Timiskaming talking about the government's habit of saying, "My way or the doorway," especially today when the Liberals showed the doorway to one of their members. So there's a little bit of irony there.

The other irony is, of course, that the member is a critic in the justice area and yet spent very little time talking about the legal aid bill and the importance of legal aid to

those who are accused of crimes or to those who are seeking help in the family law area or in the mental health area or the clinic law area, all of which are covered by the bill.

However, it's very important for us when we hear a member speak with such knowledge and passion about his riding and about what the people in his riding are experiencing at the hands of the government. The member for Timiskaming has described very accurately the very deep concern that people have around the health system, the very deep concern they have around their inability to get the government to understand that these are issues often of life and death, that they are issues that face people in a very visceral way and that it is as important for the government to listen to those pleas as it is for those who are faced with imprisonment or faced with family law problems to get legal aid.

So he didn't have time to carry through his analogy into the legal aid bill that was being discussed because he was so passionately concerned, but I think we all can make the connection of his concern to legal aid.

Mr Tilson: The topic before us today is Bill 68, which is the Legal Aid Services Act. The member for Timiskaming didn't really get into that too much. I made a note. I was writing down so fast the number of things he talked about. He gave a state of the union address. He talked about doctor shortages, ambulances, health care, tax assessment, creating jobs, small business, education governance, emergency in hospitals. Maybe I left some topics out. He covered pretty well everything, and good for him. It's an opportune time to take a rant on the government.

The problem is, you, as an opposition party, have an obligation to take the Attorney General to hand and say whether you support or whether you oppose this bill. If you oppose it, do you have a constructive alternative? Do you have any objections? I didn't hear one objection. Do you have any compliments about it? I didn't hear one compliment about it. I didn't hear anything. You had no comments about anything. You just blathered on and on and on.

There are all kinds of things that the member could have gone into: the new organization's mandate, the governance, accountability. I understand they kicked their justice critic out. I understand he's gone away and he took all their notes with them. I understand that. But at the very least, he could have read the bill and studied some of the topics that this bill is dealing with. Legal aid in this province has come to a dead stop. The Attorney General is solving that with this bill. He should be complimented, he should be congratulated and he should be encouraged by you with respect to encouraging legal aid.

The poor in this province, single mothers who need assistance for legal aid — there are all kinds of serious legal aid problems, and all you have to do is stand up and go into a general rant against the government. You had an opportunity to stand in your place and talk about this bill but you decided not to. And why? Because you're a Liberal.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I want to compliment the member for Timiskaming for his comments.

If I could respond to the member for Dufferin-Peel, the fact is that the member for Timiskaming is incredibly concerned about the extraordinary damage that the Mike Harris government has done to his constituents and how that affects their access to legal aid. He made very strong reference to that on a number of occasions. I certainly want to use the opportunity to compliment him for doing that. And there are so many other areas, you're right. He talked about a lot of areas where there are a great number of problems and was trying to give some direction back to the government. I think we should applaud him for that, rather than describing it as a rant. I think you, sir, were ranting more so by attacking him for simply standing up for his constituents and the concerns they have.

One area that interests me is the fact that certainly we know that the cuts that Mike Harris has brought upon all the people in this province have made it more difficult for people to access legal aid. It also strikes me as passing strange that we should be in many ways sitting here and also talking about ways we can fix up the family support plan, the Family Responsibility Office.

The minister knows all too well that the system that he put in place by destroying and taking all the regional offices out of the system and by setting up one system in the Toronto environs where everybody had to call through on a 1-800 number is not working. He knows it's not working because those of us in our constituency offices, and I suspect the member for Dufferin-Peel has the same experience, are discovering that people are having a horrendous time dealing with this office. They are not able to access the support they are supposed to be receiving. I can tell you that from my constituency office point of view, there are some very tragic stories of people who are counting on us to make that link between them and the Family Responsibility Office, and it's dreadful to think that nothing is being done to improve that system. That also very much needs to be worked on and, frankly, it needs to be discussed more often in this Legislature.

So I'm glad I got an opportunity to say that and to compliment the member for Timiskaming for fighting for his constituents on the issues that matter to them, as they should to everybody in this House.

Mr Kormos: I'm going to be speaking to bill after we're finished the questions and comments. You permitted my leadoff speech, an hour long, to be deferred until tonight. Mrs Boyd from London, of course, has dealt at length with the bill. So I'm going to be speaking to the bill shortly, in around three and a half minutes, as a matter of fact, for an hour.

I should warn some of the members that an hour can be a short time or it can be a real long time. It can be a short time or it can be a long time. There are concerns we intend to raise about the bill, but I tell you, in the context of an hour, there are a few things that I'm going to talk about that are surely related to this piece of legislation.

I appreciate the fact that you are the Speaker this evening because I know you are capable and bright and your judgment is good. I know that before you jump the gun and rule somebody out of order because you think

they might be meandering, you wait until they've made their point to see whether in fact they were able to bring it back home. There are a number of areas I'm going to visit in the next hour and, Speaker, bear with me, please, because I'm going to be bringing it back home at some point during the hour. So I don't want to see you jumping up and down responding to points of order which aren't valid in the first place and simply waste our time. As I say, all it does is make the process more painful rather than expedite it and let it flow along as it should.

Mrs Boyd, as I indicated, analyzed the bill at some length when she spoke to it with the modest amount of time permitted her. I'm going to refer to some comments and I think people should pay close attention to some of the observations that are going to be made during the discussion, that are going to affect them significantly.

1900

Mr Ramsay: I think we should all take notice that we have been forewarned by the member for Welland-Thorold that for a whole hour, not just the 20 minutes I had — he may be trying to make some other cases too in regard to this bill.

I accept the comment of the member for Dufferin-Peel. I accept your comment that I wasn't that accurate on the topic of this particular bill, because when I spend my time back in the riding and talking to my constituents, legal aid is not the issue they bring up. When I hear complaints from mothers with new babies in Kirkland Lake, where 50% of the population of the town does not have a family doctor, I really feel for those people. That's wrong, and those are the issues that the people I represent really care about. It's my duty to bring that up here at Queen's Park. That's my job, that's what I'm charged to do and that's what I feel deeply inside I need to do. That's why I'm doing it here tonight.

When I see a constituent in the southern part of my riding die shortly after a heart operation because he was on a waiting list for six months longer than he should have been, that upsets me. It's my duty and my charge to bring that forward down here at Queen's Park, to say that is a major problem affecting the people in my riding.

Unlike many Harrisites, I believe there is a strong role for government in this province to make sure there's a very strong health care system. As my leader, Dalton McGuinty, said, our job is to make sure there's a ladder in place. It's the job of the citizens to climb that ladder, but we have to make sure that every rung in that ladder is strong so those citizens can climb it. You have failed us in that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Kormos: There are several things at the outset. One, I can indicate to people that Blain Morin, the new member for Nickel Belt, is in the House, so folks in Chelmsford or Chapleau or anywhere in that huge riding — I suspect that Mr Morin, if he's given the opportunity, will be making his contribution to questions and comments during the 10-minute periods between the speakers on the bill.

I should also indicate that Ms Boyd and I were fortunate to have received a briefing on the bill from Nancy Austin in the Ministry of the Attorney General. She and her colleague spent some time with us going over the bill. I want to indicate to her that I appreciate that. She's present in the wings tonight. Obviously she's here; she's Mr Harnick's best friend right now. He needs her more than he needs just about anybody else. If Mr Harnick needs any help during the course of the evening, he's going to be counting on her. That's how it works.

I should tell you that Ms Boyd and I raised a number of issues with Ms Austin. Our perspective — Ms Boyd's perspective and my perspective — I suppose was a little bit of a political one, a little bit of a partisan one. Both of us, along with our colleagues in this caucus, have some serious concerns about the future of legal aid in this province and about whether or not this bill — look, we know, you of all people know, certainly you understand that the law society has effectively relinquished its control or supervision of the provision of legal aid. That is the long-standing position of the law society that was administering legal aid. It has relinquished that. I understand as well that the vote was not unanimous by the benchers, by the members of the law society, but it remains, I suppose, at the onset to the law society not wanting that much to do with it.

I should tell you also that I was at a couple of hearings that the law society conducted when it travelled across the province, consulting. The law society was consulting; I have no hesitation in saying that. The law society was far more consultative over the issue of legal aid than this government has been over any given issue. The law society travelled around the province, speaking with people in communities, including Niagara, about proposals to enhance the plan, because there have been increasing problems with the resources of the plan.

I don't know whether the law society was perhaps intimidated by some of the rather novel propositions that were made to it, including — I recall one down in Thorold, when the law society met with members of the bar and other interested parties in Niagara. I recall one member of the bar suggesting that maybe all law firms — because you see, there had developed a clawback of 5% from lawyers who accepted certificates. They had to pay back 5% of the modest hourly fees or block fees that they were able to charge. The proposal was, why should those practitioners in legal aid law — the family lawyers, the criminal lawyers — be the only ones kicking into the coffers that help to provide legal aid? This young lawyer from Niagara pointed out that maybe all law firms, including the big Bay Street law firms, the big multi-million-dollar-a-year billers, should be charged a modest percentage of their annual billings. Maybe they should have to kick in as well and pay their fair share. I wonder if propositions like that — I thought it was an interesting starting point for a discussion about whether or not all lawyers and all law firms are carrying their weight, whether they're paying their fair share. You know what I'm saying?

I know criminal lawyers and family lawyers — and we'll talk about legal clinics in short order — are certainly carrying their weight and going above and beyond. But I wondered if some of the big-priced, high-ticket law firms were paying their fair share. As it ends up, the law society says: "No, we don't want to deal with legal aid. We don't want to concern ourselves with it." I wonder if those kinds of propositions influenced in any way, shape or form the law society in relinquishing its supervision of legal aid.

All of us in the New Democratic Party accept — it's a fait accompli — that the bill is going to pass. We know that; we understand that. It's not going to pass because opposition members necessarily want it to pass; it's going to pass one way or the other because the government has a majority and government members are ill inclined to balk, to speak up, to dissent in any way, shape or form. I suspect that government members are afraid to demonstrate any dissent. I suspect that some members of the official opposition might be afraid to express any dissent, but that's a different —

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): You think we're bad.

Mr Kormos: That's a different story for a different day.

The bottom line is that this bill is going to pass second reading. We also understand, and this is incredibly important, and I hope the Attorney General understands this, that the bill is going to be subjected to a period of hearings here at Queen's Park. It's incredibly important, in view of a number of areas that have been raised already by some members of the bar and others in the community — by legal clinic staffers, be they lawyers or paralegals or other staff in legal clinics. We anticipate and have requested that there be an opportunity for these people to address the bill by way of committee hearings.

I told you that I might digress. I have to get this out of the way. The House already heard about how on Sunday at the United Church in Thorold, Mel and Thelma Swart were celebrating their 60th — can you believe it? — wedding anniversary. Both of them were in fine form, and there were literally hundreds of people who poured through that church hall, giving them their best wishes. I tell you, I join all those who at that church hall asked but one thing of Mel and Thelma: that they invite us to their 65th and then to their 70th wedding anniversaries. It's been referred to in the House already, but I wanted to indicate what a pleasure it was for me to be there and just see Mel and Thelma again, and their kids and their grandkids — it's the Yungblut family and the Swart family, and it's just an enormous, great family, great people.

The night before, Saturday night, I had been at the Slovak Hall in Welland, at the Canadian Slovak League, Branch 23, their 58th annual dinner. What's interesting is that Mel and Thelma were celebrating their 60th and the Slovak league was celebrating its 58th.

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I appreciate that we're talking here about the Legal Aid Services Act, and I certainly want to deal with that, but of great concern was — well, the community there wasn't of

great concern. They're wonderful people and their hospitality and generosity of spirit and warmth are tremendous. Branislav Galat, the president of branch 23, shared the — and we're talking about the Slovak Hall, OK? This is a hall run by what tends to be an increasingly elderly group of participants, like so many other ethnic organizations across Welland, across the province. Their property taxes, because of the new actual value assessment, market value assessment, whatever — it's the same thing. Now it's the same thing. Before, when it was being debated, Al Leach said it wasn't the same thing; now it's the same thing.

The property taxes on the Slovak Hall went from \$12,000 a year to \$20,000-plus. That's around a 70% increase. This is a volunteer, non-profit organization. Again, it's not a big group any more. This community is getting older. These people use their hall for their dinners. They've got the Bratislava dance group, little kids, just everything from almost two-and-a-half, three-year-olds up to young teenagers. They have bingos there at least once a week to try to raise some money and every once in a while there's a rental of the hall. But also what's happened is that these ethnic halls and social clubs — the Lion's Club got whacked too, big time, down in Welland. They got whacked big, along with all the other non-profit organizations. They're treated as commercial assessment and the impression one gets is that they're presumed to be commercial enterprises, to whit profit-making enterprises, business enterprises, and they're not. I think most people here understand that they're not.

I've encouraged my friend Mr Galat to speak with his executive and his board about the prospect of, I suppose, appealing the assessment once we get the legislation to extend the deadline for appeals. New Democrats were the ones who proposed that legislation and were able to see it passed so people can get those appeals in. But I think that we're going to have to rethink and ask this government to rethink, because I'm sure that is not unique to the Slovak Hall in Welland. I'm confident that it isn't. I think that's hitting hard —

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Yes, ma'am, I told you I was going to bring this home, but I had to get this out of the way because it was important that I raise this at the first possible opportunity.

I think it's happening in those same sorts of ethnic halls, be they Slovak halls, Croatian halls, national homes across the province. These are non-profit organizations. These are people who struggle with small fundraisers, raising money to maintain their hall as a social club, and they're also, to the last one, great contributors to the community in terms of charitable organizations. These are the people who donate to the hospital funds, to the cancer fundraising drives etc. The Minister of Culture might be interested because small ethnic halls have been hit hard, I'm confident, across the province.

I wanted to get that out of the way because it was something I simply had to raise here in the Legislature, and I'm pleased the Minister of Culture is here because I

knew she'd be interested; I'm sure she is. I exhort her to speak out for these social and ethnic clubs to her colleagues in cabinet.

I highlighted areas of this as I progressed through the bill. We know that it is going to be a so-called, as it was described, arm's-length corporation that's going to be running legal aid.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): He's on the bill.

Mr Kormos: Hold on. Oh, the veterinarian over there, he wouldn't know spit from Shinola about legal aid but he wants to comment. Well, at the end of the day, look, it's not your bailiwick. This can be a short hour or a long one because I've got other things to talk about as well as Bill 68 and I can tie them in like in a New York minute.

One of the first problems we encounter, because we've seen it with this government before — I have no confidence, I have none whatsoever, and I don't think any other members of this House have either when they've seen what's gone through the boards, agencies and commissions committee, the BAC committee, because the structure —

Mr John L. Parker (York East): ABC.

Mr Kormos: I call it BAC, boards, agencies, commissions. Get with it. In the 10 years I've been here it's been boards, agencies and commissions. You're going to change the rules like you have with so many other things. You guys are so cocky, so arrogant, so pushy, so naughty, so ideological. You guys simply want your own way, whether it's good for other people or not, and you've had your own way for far too long.

But we've seen the pattern of this government when it comes to appointments because I've seen them in the course of that committee. I've seen what they've done to district health councils because they talk about protocol or process. The bill indicates that five of the members of the board — now everybody's got to be appointed by the government. That's the scary part.

Mr Galt: Lieutenant Governor.

Mr Kormos: Oh, give me a break: the government; let's cut to the chase here. One of the problems with politics in this province is the dishonesty that's inherent in it and people trying to dress things up and turn a sow's ear into a silk purse, when the public knows it's a sow's ear. No matter how many millions this government may spend in slick advertising, the public knows what it is: It's a sow's ear, and this government keeps on trying to dress it up like a silk purse.

But let's get down to the board, and I wish the Attorney General would take some note of this: What's very dangerous about this bill, insofar as I can see here, is that you've got five persons exclusively selected by the government, so we're talking about five Tory appointees because this government pork-barrels like you haven't seen in a good 25 years. You've gone back to the good old days of pork-barrelling and just sniffing and gobbling out of the trough.

Mr Parker: Come on, Sean Conway does a much better job than this.

Mr Kormos: Did somebody wake up over there or did somebody drop their crayons? It's incredible how at 7:20 at night this fellow could finally blurt out something.

The problem you've got with the boys is that you've got five government appointments.

Look, I don't know whether he's one of the lawyers in that caucus or not. Is that member one of the lawyers? Somebody help.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): That's what I heard.

Mr Kormos: OK. I guess they come in all shapes and sizes and all levels of intellect.

Mr Galt: This is honest.

Mr Kormos: I suppose they come in all shapes and sizes, all levels of intellect. There you go.

So here's a lawyer; I don't know if he's one of the Tory lawyers who's still practising law. I know there are a few.

Mr Len Wood: Most of them.

Mr Kormos: I know there are more than a few Tory lawyers who are — I call it — double-dipping. I figure the people who have the fortune, or misfortune — I suppose it depends upon where you stand to have elected a Tory lawyer — those people should be able to go to his or her constituency office and get legal advice. They're already paying for it because they're already paying the salaries of those same people, aren't they?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): That's right.

Mr Kormos: Those Tory lawyers shouldn't be conducting practices where they charge people money.

Mr Baird: The Liberals also —

Mr Kormos: I don't think anybody in this Legislature should be doing that. Instead of double-dipping, and I tell people who live in ridings that are represented by any member of the Legislature — I don't care whether it's Tory, Liberal or NDP — who've got a lawyer as their MPP: "By God, don't be paying those fees. Don't be paying for those services. You're already paying that person's salary." As far as I'm concerned, that MPP has no business spending time in a law practice. They should be, if they're not here at Queen's Park, in their constituency office taking care of constituents, and if that means doing legal work, so be it. I know that other MPPs with other backgrounds apply the skills of their work in their constituency offices. Why shouldn't the lawyers do the same?

God forbid that any of them should have billed legal aid over the course of the last three years. I'm confident — or dare I say that? I was going to express confidence in the fact that there wouldn't be a Tory lawyer who would have billed legal aid over the last three years.

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Mr Ramsay: I think he picked up his crayon. He's very quiet now.

Mr Kormos: Interesting, isn't it? I dare say there isn't a Tory lawyer who would have billed legal aid in the last three years. I don't know; I suppose that remains to be seen.

Your problem that people out there should be concerned about is the fact that this government, in my view

and in our caucus's view, can stack the board of directors of this new corporation. We've seen it with district health councils, where rather than the protocol of relying upon nominees from the district health council, the government circumvented that and went out and picked political personalities so that those political personalities can represent their interests on district health councils, for instance. Quite frankly, we've seen it far too often.

The other area, of course, is that in our view the bill is somewhat deficient in describing the extent to which the board should be representative of a community. The bill, no two ways about it, highlights some sectors that should be represented. The bill doesn't require the representation of ethnic minorities, for instance. It doesn't require that there be francophone representation on the board, which is especially of concern when the legal aid system is relieved of compliance with the French Language Services Act. Even in Bill 8 communities it's optional. It's up to the board to decide whether a particular legal aid office, even if it's in a Bill 8 community, is going to provide French-language services. I know that's of concern.

Quite frankly, the Attorney General may want to explain why the board is exempt from Bill 8. The Attorney General may say that is because it's not a government agency because it's an arm's-length agency. Right? Because that's the premise here, that it's an arm's-length agency.

Hon Mr Harnick: Wrong, Peter.

Mr Kormos: Hold on. The Attorney General is getting anxious. He's going to have to wait 39 minutes if he's going to use two minutes for responses.

Hon Mr Harnick: Don't make me wait that long.

Mr Kormos: Now he's getting anxious, he's getting nervous.

Hon Mr Harnick: I'm going back to reading the paper.

Mr Kormos: He's going back to reading his paper. That's yesterday's paper, Attorney General, but I suppose to you, it really doesn't matter.

Hon Mr Harnick: No, it's Tuesday's.

Mr Kormos: I saw yesterday's paper. I know that's yesterday's paper. The Attorney General is still reading yesterday's paper. It could be Monday of a year ago, for all I know.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Address your comments to the Chair.

Hon Mr Harnick: He's not sticking to the bill.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Attorney General, come to order. I don't care what paper you're reading. Member for Welland-Thorold, come back to order.

Mr Kormos: Yes, it was yesterday's paper before 6 o'clock, because now it's tomorrow.

In any event, I suppose the only nice thing about the pension buyouts is that those of us with lesser years than the members of the millionaires' club, like the Premier and the Treasurer — I suppose the Premier —

Hon Mr Harnick: You're part of that club.

Mr Kormos: I'm just a little player. The government had to accommodate the little players. I don't belong to the

instant millionaire club that the pension buyout resulted in, with the Premier, the Treasurer. Who's the minister who sits right down at the end? Energy? Environment. He's a member of the millionaires' club. There are New Democrats brought into it as well, but the neat thing is that the Premier lost a good 50 grand in the last month. Right? Those smaller players, whose buyouts were far more reasonable, lost a few. But the Premier lost a good 50 grand in the last month with the collapse of stock markets. Think about it. I suppose if there's any justice —

Hon Mr Harnick: You don't know how he invested it.

Mr Kormos: Don't tell me Mike Harris went Bre-X as well. The Attorney General is suggesting that he wasn't in one of those conservative —

Hon Mr Harnick: How do you know where people invest, Peter? You invest your money in the stock market.

The Acting Speaker: Attorney General, come to order. Member for Welland-Thorold, would you come back to the bill, please.

Mr Kormos: The Premier's down 50 grand, and that's the only modest pleasure we can take, I suppose, from the last month, although a lot of other people who earn their money got —

Mr Baird: Gaining pleasure out of other people's misfortune.

Mr Kormos: No. A whole lot of other people who earn their money got hurt big time.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean, come to order.

Mr Kormos: But I take some pleasure out of the fact that the Premier is probably down a good 50 grand, in view of the fact that the Premier bought himself out for a million bucks. The Premier, the Treasurer, Minister of the Environment — who else is in that? Is the Solicitor General in that?

Mr Galt: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I believe the subject is Bill 68, having to do with legal aid. I've heard very little about legal aid this evening. I'm wondering if we could have —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Member for Welland-Thorold, I ask you again to come back to the main point of the bill. I am tolerant and I let people deviate quite a bit from the subject, but you've gone way off for too long. Would you please come back.

Mr Kormos: The Attorney General here keeps leading me off of Bill 68 on to things like the Premier's pension buyout. If the Attorney General wants to talk about the Premier's pension buyout, he should do it in his two minutes, which will come in relatively short order.

Hon Mr Harnick: No, 36 more minutes is not short order.

Mr Kormos: Stick with us, Attorney General, because if you haven't had this brought to your attention by your staff, we want to bring it to your attention now.

You know that the refugee lawyers' association has expressed grave concern about the omission of refugee law. The argument, according to the explanation tendered to Ms Boyd and me, as we recall it — I don't want to put any civil servants on the spot — is that the civil procedure embraced or encompassed refugee law, including all wide

ranges of administrative law. Far be it from me to pass judgment on that.

Mr Galt: No, a real shame.

Mr Kormos: Well, no, far be it from me. But I talked to a number of lawyers who practise that kind of law, and they suggested to me that if they meant administrative law, they should have specifically said administrative law, because when they talk about refugee law over in the sections where they've got the three- and two-year guarantees, they use the specific language "refugee law," but it's a two-year guarantee to maintain the status quo of the budgeting for refugee law and three years for legal clinics.

The problem, in essence, with the bill — the Attorney General knows full well and he should anticipate what the arguments are going to be — is that that are no guarantees here beyond the three years for legal clinics and the two years of status quo funding. I spoke with Ms Austin before I began, because the Attorney General had talked about how the status quo in terms of overall funding was guaranteed for three years. What I find out is that that isn't included in the legislation. I invite the Attorney General to point to the section in the bill that talks about the guarantee of three years' funding to maintain the status quo for the overall funding of legal aid.

Sure, the Attorney General said it here in the Legislature. He said the government is committing itself. Well, you can't believe this government's promises, can you? This is the same Attorney General who told us that the family support plan was up and running. Two months after it was supposed to have started, you told us it was up and running. Three month, four months, five months after it was started, you told us it was up and running. Did he lie? Did he, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: That's unparliamentary. You have to withdraw that, please.

Mr Kormos: I withdraw the question. I withdraw that. I won't ask whether the Attorney General lied. I won't ask that question.

Mr Galt: You can't use that word. That's terrible.

Mr Kormos: I won't. I won't ask that question. All I know is that our office is still inundated —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Welland-Thorold, you just did it again. You have to withdraw that, please.

Mr Kormos: I withdraw "lie." I withdraw that the Attorney General lied.

The Acting Speaker: You can't keep doing that. Just withdraw.

Mr Kormos: I withdraw.

We finally found out that the Attorney General hadn't been as forthright as he could have been. As a matter of fact, if Diogenes had been here in the Legislature he could have swung that lamp in front of the Attorney General for a good day and a half, a week, two weeks, a month, and still wouldn't have found anything he was looking for. Think about it, Speaker.

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Mr Parker: Speaker, on a point of order: The member just did it again. I wonder if you would have a word with him.

The Acting Speaker: I'm not so sure that he did do it that time.

Mr Parker: We all heard him.

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat. I'm on my feet and I'm ruling. My mind must have wandered briefly. I didn't hear the member. If he did say something unparliamentary, I would ask him to withdraw. That's all I can do.

Mr Kormos: If I said anything unparliamentary, I withdraw it. What I did say was that if Diogenes had been —

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Well, the Speaker can rule on this.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Welland-Thorold, if you want to get through your next 30 minutes, you have to stop doing that. You have to withdraw that.

Mr Kormos: I withdraw Diogenes. Poor Diogenes, still searching through the whole legislative precinct, through ministry offices nearby and even all the way down Bay Street — what's the address on Bay Street? You know the one, over on the west side of Bay Street, just near the bus station. Diogenes is searching and searching and searching, to no avail. The lamp is burning oil far beyond anybody's capacity. Diogenes is still searching, because we know the minister wasn't forthright about the family support plan.

The Acting Speaker: You can't say that either. Would you withdraw, please.

Mr Kormos: We know that the minister was less than thorough in his responses to members of the opposition about the status of the family support plan office, the Family Responsibility Office.

The minister has made a commitment. He said the government is going to maintain for three years the level of overall funding for the legal aid system that it has currently. It's not in the bill. If we can't trust — I'm being very careful here, Speaker; blink once if I'm OK, blink twice if I'm erring. If the minister did not engage in full disclosure about the status of the family support plan, why should we expect the minister to be any more straightforward, to be any more reliable than he was then, in his comment that the government is going to maintain for the next three years the level of funding that's available currently to this new legal aid plan?

The government clearly has forced the corporation to maintain the funding of legal clinics at the status quo for three years. The legislation says that. It has clearly forced the corporation to maintain the funding of refugee law for a mere two years; the legislation says that. The fact that the corporation will still have a mandate and an obligation to run clinics after the three years is contrasted significantly with the fact that it has no obligation to provide refugee law services, none whatsoever. The description of clinic services, specifically omitting refugee law, means that not only will the corporation be in a position never to provide a single certificate to private counsel for refugee law but that, two, clinics will not be authorized or permitted to engage in refugee law as well. That's one of the omissions that Ms Boyd made reference to and that I refer people to now.

The bill, when it indicates "shall provide," throws in the little kicker which we saw in this government's inevitable tinkering and toying and attack on arbitration processes. The government here is totally empowered to do through the back door what it wouldn't dare do politically through the front door. The board, this corporation, must consider — because it has an obligation to provide criminal certificates and family certificates to private counsel and legal clinic services, but in the course of providing those it must have reference to the funding available to it.

This government, if it doesn't make more than merely the Attorney General's promise — what's that worth? What is the Attorney General's promise worth? A pocket full of change? Maybe not even that much. We've seen the history. The fact is that if there was a commitment to three years of maintaining the status quo — is the change bit getting to you, Speaker? You're blinking twice. OK, I'll put the change away.

I see the dialogue here. The Speaker is being tipped off that maybe I'm getting close to violating rules of procedure. You know what's incredible about the Legislature? That it's OK to lie, but it's not OK to call somebody a liar. I'm not making reference to anybody in particular. It's a remarkable thing: It's OK to lie in the Legislature, but it's not OK to call somebody a liar. If that's not a contradiction, nothing really is.

I've had specific conversations with members of the refugee lawyers' association, with members of the bar who represent refugees. I understand that this government probably is going to indicate that it is the feds that should be picking that up.

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Speaker: As a member of this House, I would ask for a ruling from you as to whether in fact the member's statement that it is appropriate for a member of this House to lie in this chamber is correct. Would you do that for me, please.

The Acting Speaker: Let me say that in my view what he said was not unparliamentary in that he was not accusing any particular member in this House of lying. From my point of view, whether he was accurate or not is beside the point. My ruling is that he was not unparliamentary because he didn't accuse anybody of lying or of being a liar.

Mr Klees: Madam Speaker, that was not my request.

The Acting Speaker: I heard your request. Take your seat a moment. You asked me to rule on whether or not what he stated was factual. I'm telling you it's not my job to tell you whether a member is factual or not. My job is to make sure that members do not use unparliamentary language. In my view, the member at this time did not do that.

Mr Klees: On a point of personal privilege then.

The Acting Speaker: It had better be good because you're using up the member's time.

Mr Klees: On a matter of personal privilege, Madam Speaker, I consider this very serious because as a member of this Legislature the member opposite has left the impression clearly with anyone who is watching here that

it is appropriate for members of this Legislature to lie in this place.

The Acting Speaker: No. Member for York-Mackenzie, I understand your point, but my point is very clear. It's not my job to rule on the accuracy of members' statements. You will have to deal with that; perhaps you will have two minutes later, whatever. But I rule that the member was not unparliamentary and that is the end of it.

Member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Kormos: Thank you, Speaker. Needless to say, I agree with your ruling in that regard. I was very careful in terms of how I approached it and I stand very much by what I said.

It's just one of the ironies, one of the contradictions about this place. What does a member do if a member catches another member, if it were to happen, in a mistruth, not a misstatement by inadvertence? What's a member to do if you catch another member expressing a total falsehood?

You see, that's the problem, because this is where I say a member is powerless, because of that rule, to say to another member, to point out, to expose that person for what she or he really is. Surely other members find that incredibly frustrating, that it's not OK to call somebody a liar here, even if it's an observation and a conclusion that's based on fact, even if it's a conclusion that's accurate. Needless to say, I find that frustrating, and I'm not accusing anybody of engaging in mistruths.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The discussion that the member for Welland-Thorold is having with himself about this issue is quite entertaining. I would like you to rule on that as having anything whatsoever to do with Bill 68.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member for Welland-Thorold if he would come back to the bill at hand, please.

Mr Kormos: You know what the issue is. The issue is that we have to rely merely on the Attorney General's say-so, the Attorney General's commitment, the Attorney General's promise that the current level of funding of legal aid in the broadest sense is going to be maintained for three years. That could have been contained in the bill. It could have been included in the legislation, the same way — and that's why I have now, for probably the tenth time, made reference to the sections that guarantee the status quo in terms of funding for (1) legal clinics for three years and (2) refugee law for a period of two years. Had this government really meant what it said when it said it was going to maintain the current level of funding for a minimum of three years, it would be in the bill, and it isn't.

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That's what I said to you at the very outset, before I talked about the Canadian Slovak League, branch 23 down in Welland, and its 70% property tax increases, and before we got to whether we should be satisfied with the mere promise by the Attorney General about the level of funding. His promise is very much to the point here. I talked to you about this bill being more about what is not

in here as compared to what is in here and the fact that this government can effectively scuttle legal aid, be it clinics, notwithstanding that there's an obligation for the board, this new corporation, to provide clinic services. I agree, the bill says that or at least pays lip service to it. But the government can defund to the point where the board has to shut clinics down and will shut clinics down because the funding of the program isn't legislated. The level of funding isn't obligatory, it's purely discretionary on the part of the government.

I know that there's not a whole lot of spin out there on the issue of legal aid. That's why Branislav Galat was talking to me about property taxes rather than Bill 68. That's why it's up to that small community out there that is interested and is concerned to make their voices heard.

This government has an ongoing problem with the Askov type of rulings. Just recently it was brought to the Attorney General's attention that an incredibly serious charge, allegedly resulting in a fatality, was stayed as a result of the application once again of — I think Askov and Melo v The Queen is the full decision.

The Attorney General doesn't understand. Judges have observed over the course of the last couple of years that while the role of the criminal defence lawyer may not be applauded by all in the community, and least of all by those who feel that somehow victims are shortchanged in lieu of the rights of accused — and I'm not going to say that there is a reason for not feeling that way. I have every sympathy with the observation that victims are often overlooked, even with the Victims' Bill of Rights. Again, another promise. Was it kept? If it wasn't kept, why? Because my experience with the Victims' Bill of Rights and the contacts I've had through my constituency office and through my office here and the questions that have been raised with the Attorney General and the recent lawsuit that was entered upon — you recall the lawsuit, yet more litigation — was by victims who were denied their rights under the Victims' Bill of Rights.

The bill places interesting obligations on lawyers. It requires them to effectively rat out their clients to legal aid and creates an offence for lawyers who neglect to do that. I am referring specifically to section 43. There are going to be grave concerns raised about the extent to which that interferes with, violates, interrupts, forces a lawyer to abandon or begin to question his or her obligation to his or her client. Again, what the government is trying to do is turn lawyers, with the unique solicitor-client relationship, into its own policing officers for its legal aid plan, and I think that's entirely inappropriate.

This government hasn't really cared about the issue of family law, and I don't think there is anywhere where the legal aid system is more critical and has demonstrated itself to be as deficient as in the area of family law. Have you tried to get a family lawyer to take on a legal aid certificate case? Have any of you called family lawyers? Because the fact is that most family lawyers recognize that the cap on billing makes it virtually impossible for them to do family law.

Mr Guzzo: I have no conflict.

Mr Kormos: The judge — are you suggesting you're still doing law and charging for it? I talked about that a little while ago: a Tory backbencher practising law and charging money for it. I find that a real contradiction of one's obligation to the Legislature.

Mr Guzzo: I haven't sent out a bill in years.

Mr Kormos: I just find it interesting that you've got backbenchers here engaged in the practice of law and charging fees. Again, I don't know whether any of them has billed legal aid. I saw some body language over there by one backbencher that suggested he had, that he had done family work on legal aid. That's really unconscionable, in my view.

Once again, we'll return to the whole difficulty that all of us have in our offices with constituents who come into our offices who are in dire straits. We predicted it with the Attorney General when the family support guidelines were in place. The Attorney General once again jumped up and down and said: "Oh no, everything is underway. We're more than capable of dealing with the applications for variation." Not the case; it's simply not the case.

Women particularly are finding themselves without counsel and being forced to carry their own cases into courts which as often as not are incredibly overcrowded. I should indicate that there's going to be some redress in that regard as the result of the adoption, or the expansion at least, of the Unified Family Court system. But the fact remains that the biggest chunk of women out there, low-income women or no-income women, simply aren't able to access counsel for the purpose of family litigation, and there's nothing in this legislation that's going to guarantee any minimum level of service to those women. At the end of the day, the government can do to legal aid through the back door what it won't do politically through the front door, and that is, it can simply defund legal aid so that it all but eliminates legal clinics and private practitioners who take certificates.

The Attorney General has made it quite clear what he thinks about picking up the tab for young offenders and, indeed, in the legislation an interesting section makes it merely discretionary. When a court orders counsel to be appointed under the Young Offenders Act for a young offender — I'm looking at section 16 — the section merely says that the Attorney General "may" direct that the corporation provide legal services to that young offender. Again, the Attorney General wants to pursue some sort of crass political agenda rather than engage in any sort of compliance with the Young Offenders Act.

You know, Attorney General, that appeals of bail, for instance, are simply not being performed by way of lawyers who are retained by legal aid certificates. The tariff provided for appeals of bail is simply not sufficient to enable a lawyer to engage in the preparation of material necessary to file a notice and all the other paperwork that I'm told is involved with an appeal of bail to get the accused person into court and so on.

This government is inviting, I tell you, literally more and more Askov problems if it thinks it's serving its law-and-order interests by removing criminal lawyers from the

court. Judges have noted that; the Attorney General prefers simply not to understand it.

I've got seniors in my community who led middle-class lives, who thought they had done all the right things, who now find themselves confronted, for instance, because of the increase in property taxes — in Niagara region it was \$18 million in new property taxes imposed by Niagara region. They're not my numbers; they're the numbers of the regional municipality of Niagara. That's after they had done all the trimming and the cutting and the tearing away of fat that they'd been doing for years already.

This government is punishing those municipalities like the regional municipality of Niagara that have been efficient, that have trimmed away the fat, that have done their best to reduce their costs. We've got a community like Niagara with \$18 million in new property taxes; that's the number. Fewer services; that's the reality. More user fees; that's the reality. But higher taxes across the board.

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I told you about Slovak Hall and similar ethnic social clubs. Let me tell you about residential property taxpayers. I talked about senior citizens. I've got senior citizens in my community who thought they had done all the right things all of their lives, who worked incredibly hard, who saved a few dollars, who invested in their kids' futures as well and who thought that they were going to be OK, who thought that they were going to be able to retire in what had been the family home, the same home that they had raised kids in, that their grandchildren had visited them in, who now, because of 40%, 50% and 60% increases in property taxes, are literally fearful of the prospect of losing their homes. What's the government going to suggest to them? Reverse mortgages? You know that what you've effectively done is made a deal with the devil.

Mr Galt: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I believe that this hour is dedicated to Bill 68. For the last five minutes, we've been talking about property tax. I wonder if there's any chance we could get back to Bill 68. I'm really quite —

The Acting Speaker: I tend to be somewhat lenient in the chair with members of all parties. I listen carefully and when I feel that the member has wandered too far, I will ask the member to come back. Please remember what we're debating here.

Mr Kormos: I got carried away a little bit by the recollection of recent comments. I apologize to the veterinarian. I got carried away. I wasn't speaking to the bill, Speaker. No, I wasn't speaking to the bill. I admit I was not speaking to Bill 68. I confess. Look, do what you will with me. Punish me if you must. I applaud the veterinarian for being oh, so bold as to stand up on a point of order and say that the member for Welland-Thorold wasn't on point. Big deal. So what? What's new? Give us a break, for Pete's sake.

Of course I wasn't on point because I was talking about increases in property taxes that have been imposed on seniors in the region of Niagara. That has very little to do with legal aid, but it has very much to do with the gov-

ernment and the issue of whether it can be trusted. You see the connection? Speaker, we're taking this back home. You see the connection? This government couldn't be trusted when it said that the downloading was neutral. What was the phrase? Revenue-neutral. The fact is that it left Niagara regional taxpayers with a new bill of \$18 million in new taxes. That's not revenue-neutral. You could have relied —

Mr Galt: Wrong, wrong.

Mr Kormos: They're not my numbers. They're the numbers that come from the regional municipality of Niagara, the new property taxes this year. They're the new taxes and reduced services and increases in new user fees. That's the reality of it. You see, we couldn't trust the government when it came to their mere say-so that there weren't going to be new property taxes. That's clear now. They said it was to be revenue-neutral. Once all the evidence is out there, new taxes to the tune of \$18 million is the net effect.

I'm talking about whether you can trust this government to live up to its promises about legal aid. That's what I'm talking about. Let's take a look at the track record of this government. Was it honest — can I say that? — when it said that the downloading was revenue-neutral? I suppose maybe it was misled by the bureaucrats. I mean, that's the impression one gets. Bureaucrats can mislead, can't they? A member can't, but bureaucrats can. Why, that was the pitch of the Premier when it came down to the \$200-plus million that emergency rooms have been waiting for across this province since spring of this year. He blamed it on the bureaucrats. The Premier suggested that it wasn't he, the Premier, who — you know what I mean — but rather it was the bureaucrats who misled the people of Ontario. That's what he said. He didn't use that exact language, but that's the impression he was trying to create.

Well, can we believe — can we rely on him, rather? I think not, because I don't think very many people have been conned or fooled by that. Heck, I suppose the government may embark on some multi-million dollar ad campaigns to try to prop up its following up of that financial support that was promised for emergency rooms, a broken promise that has resulted in significant tragedies across the province already. We saw but one cheque delivered. I suppose the cheque may have cleared by now. But the remaining countless hospitals — well, can we trust the government?

Mr Tilson: Yes.

Mr Kormos: The member for Dufferin-Peel says yes. I ask him to reflect on the fact that the people in Niagara were stuck with \$18 million in new taxes because of the government's downloading. The government promised it would be revenue-neutral. I put that to him. I suppose he's so indoctrinated that if I ask him once again, "Can you trust this government?" he might still respond yes, nodding his head up and down. The strings are marginally visible.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough-Ellesmere): Only marginally?

Mr Kormos: From this distance you can just barely see the outline of the strings as these little marionettes —

can I say that, Speaker? Oh, no, now I can't say "marionettes." Please, Speaker. What have we got here? If we can't use language, what exactly are you suggesting, Speaker? What exactly are you encouraging or inciting if we can't use language? If you're going to forbid language, exactly what is the point? What is it that you're suggesting be the option?

We couldn't trust this government when it came to downloading. We couldn't trust this government when it came to jobs. Down where I come from in Niagara, I'm visited by legions of people whose unemployment is persistent and increasingly chronic. People recognize that there have been new jobs when a new chain restaurant opens up and there are 300 applications for 20 positions, part-time, minimum-wage, temporary. But you don't support a family on part-time, minimum-wage, temporary, and that's what this government is talking about when it talks about its new jobs. So we couldn't trust them when it came to that either.

We couldn't trust them when it came to property taxes.

We can't trust them when it comes to real job creation. Oh, I know it has its dog-and-pony show. A bunch of these folks are going to be down in Niagara region, in St Catharines, at the Ramada Parkway Inn on Thursday. I'll be there. A few of my colleagues from Niagara are going to be there. But it's their dog-and-pony show, so-called jobs and prosperity.

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I was in Kingston last night. They tried to play that card in Kingston, but the people of Kingston weren't fooled. The Tories who were at their expensive dog-and-pony show, trying to put on the dog, I suppose, trying to create the impression that somehow this government had anything in mind other than minimum-wage jobs and maintaining increasingly high levels of unemployment, should have been down where I was, with the folks across from city hall in the lakeside park in Kingston, who talked about real jobs and real prosperity rather than phony jobs and phony prosperity.

Here we are with the government's so-called legal aid reform. Here I am with but two minutes and 31 seconds left.

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): You can do it.

Mr Kormos: I am going to struggle. I'm going to muster all the energy I have to occupy that remaining two minutes and 20 seconds.

The bill is going to pass. We know that. I'm telling you, though, that the absence of legislated commitments to minimum levels of service, both at the clinic level and at the certificate level, should be bothersome for every single Tory backbencher. This government is inviting yet more problems. If it wants to get criminal lawyers out of the courts, I suppose, by defunding the certificate system for criminal law, it can and it will, but then it has aggravated the Askov situation. You know what that is. It has been around for a good chunk of time. It has been around since the Liberals. I understand that. I was here then too. That's when it occurred, its roots, its origin.

This government is not serving anybody's interests by denying the need for criminal representation and under-

standing that criminal representation, especially that occurring in most parts of this province in provincial courts and county courts, General Division courts, indeed makes the system work and expedites the flow of files of accused through the system. It does.

The Attorney General was jumpy and antsy for a while. He was. Then he finished the Globe from yesterday. Yesterday, of course, ended at 6 o'clock. This is day two, having commenced at 6:30. Now the Attorney General is going to want to impress us with yet more assurances. We couldn't trust him on the family support plan — didn't.

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): Is it working now?

Mr Kormos: Well, no. We don't trust him any more now than we did when he was telling us the family support plan was up and running. What you have here is another family support plan in waiting with this bill, a legal aid plan that's destined to be scuttled if the Tories have their way with it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Hon Mr Harnick: I listened intently to the member's words, as always puffed with air, highly exaggerated and, I might say, quite worthy of the stage at Stratford. Mr Speaker, I know you're well aware of Stratford, your home town.

I think it's important to know that this bill was developed in full co-operation with the Law Society of Upper Canada, which has been the traditional body that has run legal aid. We relied very much on their expertise. We relied very much on the expertise of the Criminal Lawyers' Association, which has fully supported this bill, and the Family Lawyers' Association, which has fully supported this bill, and clinic lawyers, who have fully supported the development of this bill.

I have had an opportunity to meet with clinic lawyers, with family lawyers, with criminal lawyers, and they all indicated that it was very important to build a plan under which people could be served appropriately, where there would be an appropriate amount of time allocated to do the work so that clients could be properly served. They have guided us in the development of this bill.

I might tell you that if you take a look at section 13 of the bill it provides for clinic services, for criminal services under the certificate system and for family services and for mental health law.

Section 81 provides that this bill will be governed by the French Language Services Act. The member didn't read that section.

I could go on, and I will have that opportunity at another time, but I think it is very gratifying to know that those who practise in the profession and serve those who need legal aid support this bill.

Mr Gravelle: I want to compliment the member for Welland-Thorold for his usual eloquent remarks and his ability to certainly get under the skin of the government very effectively.

Interjections.

Mr Gravelle: I'm glad they're agreeing with me with their chorus right now.

What needs to be said is that, as we all know, the McCamus report made 92 recommendations. Part of the problem with this particular piece of legislation is it really only deals with one aspect of those recommendations. One can't deny the reality that basically the inability of low-income earners to access legal aid has been affected in a very dramatic way in the last three and a half years by, in very specific terms, the cuts that have taken place under the Mike Harris government. We know the number of certificates that were issued in the last year was dramatically down from previous years even though the funding was still maintained at a certain level. So there are some real problems attached to this.

We all know what the lack of legal representation can honestly mean. It results obviously in increased court appearances, it adds more delay to the court system and it also puts judges in a very difficult position frequently when there's no legal counsel in place.

The important thing to remember is that we need to be able to maintain access. For those people who are in circumstances where they can't afford a lawyer, the legal aid system is very important.

In my community in Thunder Bay I work very closely, for example, with the Kinna-Aweya Legal Clinic, which is a remarkable legal clinic in Thunder Bay. They've been very conscious of some of the difficulties that have taken place over the last three and a half years.

While this legislation deals with some aspects of the McCamus report, what's important to recognize — I'm sure the Attorney General does recognize this and would acknowledge this — is that there's still a long way to go to make this legislation what it really should be. Certainly those are some of the concerns we have and I know my colleague from Sudbury will be expressing some of the other concerns as we carry through the evening.

Thank you for the opportunity, Mr Speaker.

Mr Blain K. Morin (Nickel Belt): I would like to start by thanking the member for Welland-Thorold for that concise and yet very descriptive presentation on Bill 68.

The intent of the bill is to meet the needs of Ontarians who need legal aid. I was particularly interested in the member's description concerning the government's commitment to level of funding for legal aid. That is so important these days.

I believe the member, in representing his constituency for over 10 years now, has done an excellent job. When the member says that we have to be concerned about the level of funding, we know about that level of funding and we've seen that lack of funding around issues, particularly in Nickel Belt, particularly in that level of funding around nurse practitioners. We've heard the announcements, we continue to hear the announcements from this government and yet we don't ever seem to see the money.

Interjection: The cheque is almost in the mail.

Mr Blain Morin: The cheque is almost in the mail.

We heard from the Minister of Health today, who is busy making cheques today. In Nickel Belt we're concerned about that lack of funding and we're really concerned around emergency wards. We're very con-

cerned about the lack of funding and what it has done around transfer payments. Finally, the constituents in Nickel Belt are very concerned about the lack of funding for basic rights, and in this case the basic right is one of justice.

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Mr Galt: I'm going to have to compliment the member for Welland-Thorold as well. It's amazing how supportive he is of Bill 68. He talked about everything else except Bill 68 and that tells me he's very supportive of it. He was so far off topic. He talked about lawyers in the House double-dipping. He talked about property tax extensively. He talked about investments and how he invests his money. He talked about the track record of the government which, by the way, has been absolutely exemplary but he doesn't recognize it. Then he spent a very long time talking about House etiquette and what people could or couldn't do in the House. I'm a little concerned about the image what he was saying would leave with the people at home: that it's in order to lie in this House. I certainly cannot support his concerns there.

He talked about refugee law and that area. There's some responsibility the federal government must have when it comes to immigrants and when it comes to refugees. They're the ones who are letting them in. Surely to goodness.

They have almost eliminated their support in health care. They have almost eliminated their support in education. They've almost eliminated their support in social services. I don't know what those Liberals in Ottawa do with their money, but it's certainly not to support programs they have forced on to the provinces in the past.

I think his comments about trusting a government are interesting. This government has developed in the last three years a reputation of doing what we said we would do. You just go out and ask on the street and people will repeat that over and over again. If you ask them if we're on the right track, 58% say we're on the right track.

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. The member for Welland-Thorold has two minutes to respond.

Mr Kormos: The problem is that the Attorney General still persists in conjuring up images that are less than real. The attorney is — well, I know I can't call him a liar. The Attorney General says that this bill was drafted in consultation with clinicians; with legal clinics across the province. It wasn't, Attorney General. You know that, I know that and the people working in those clinics know that, because if they had had a role in drafting the legislation, there would have been guarantees about the ongoing funding of the overall legal aid system. There's no guarantee in this legislation about the ongoing funding for the legal aid system.

We know this government's attitudes towards the courts. It has allowed Askov cases to pile up. It has abandoned its own Victims' Bill Of Rights. It has under-resourced police officers across this province. We've got cops down in Niagara three and four and five at a time manning speed traps so they can collect money on option 4

rather than being out there investigating criminal activity that they want to be out there investigating and should be out there investigating. We've got response time by police officers dramatically reduced because of the gross shortage of police officers.

This government talks a big game about justice but simply doesn't deliver. Attorney General, some of those very same people you talked about — the people working in legal clinics, the people working on certificates in criminal law and more significantly with respect to this issue in family law — know all about your track record. When it came to the family support plan, the Family Responsibility Office, they're the ones who had to deal with the crisis you created. They couldn't trust you then; they can't trust you now. You would put it in the bill if you really meant it.

We know the bill is going to pass. We know it's inevitable. But you have not made a commitment, and won't, to anyone.

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate.

Mr Parker: I am pleased to have this opportunity to rise to add my comments on this bill, which happens to be about reforming the legal aid system, regardless of what anyone listening in might be misled to believe the topic is this evening.

I see by the clock that I have just 10 minutes to register my remarks this evening, but I promise you, Mr Speaker, that in the 10 minutes available to me I will dedicate more time to the subject of this bill than the member for Welland-Thorold was just able to put towards the bill in the total hour he had available to him.

I know the member for Welland-Thorold didn't talk all that much about this bill because it's not in his nature — it's not his job — to speak in complimentary terms of an initiative by this government, but if he had spoken more about this bill he wouldn't have been able to avoid being complimentary towards this government, particularly for this specific initiative.

The real test is going to be when the time comes to vote. I'm going to be watching to see just how the opposition members vote when this bill comes to the time to make a decision. I wonder whether the members of the opposition will agree with the members on this side and with the vast members of the public, the members of the practising bar, the members of the consuming legal aid public and others, and with the Toronto Star, which are all very supportive of the initiatives that are to be found in this bill.

I refer you to the Toronto Star editorial of October 12, about a week ago, under the heading "Sound Legal Aid Plan." I'll just pull out a few of the salient comments from this editorial, leading with this, "It's been a long time coming, but Ontario's new legislation to overhaul the legal aid system was worth the wait." The Toronto Star lays out a number of criteria that it determined were vital to a proper overhaul of the legal aid system. One point that the Toronto Star is looking for is that "Legal aid should be independent." Another point is that "The agency's budget

should be adequate, predictable, and preferably multi-year." Another point that the Toronto Star was looking for in legal aid reform was that "The agency should have room to experiment, innovate and test ideas."

What's the verdict of the Toronto Star on the bill that has been brought forward by the Attorney General? "Harnick has met our concerns on all points." That's what the Toronto Star has to say about this bill that we are here debating this evening. I am going to be looking with interest to see just how the members of the opposition parties vote when this bill does come to a vote before this House.

Given the excursion we've been given through all sorts of topics, however tenuously related to this bill and I would suggest totally unrelated to this bill, maybe it's time to bring the discussion back to bear on the subject matter of the bill and touch on some of the key elements not only in the bill itself but in the process leading to the bill. Remember, as the Toronto Star says, "It's been a long time coming." It's been about 30 years since there has been a serious overhaul of the legal aid program in this province.

Ms Mushinski: How many years?

Mr Parker: Some 30 years.

Other governments have come and other governments have gone, other governments have had the chance to review and to revise and to reform the legal aid system. Have they done it? It looks like they haven't. But this government and this Attorney General have taken on the challenge and have brought forward a bill that has the endorsement of the Toronto Star, no less, for the nature of the reforms that are brought to bear.

It was clear that the status quo was not working for Ontarians who needed access to legal aid services and it was clear there was a need to do a thorough review of the system. The Attorney General brought in an independent expert, Professor John McCamus, to review the system thoroughly and to form the blueprint for the creation of a new model to deliver legal aid services in Ontario, recognizing that the demand for legal aid had changed greatly during the past three decades. In fact, in the years between 1989 and 1994 spending on legal aid had doubled. That shows you the magnitude of the problem, the challenge that had to be addressed.

The government launched this review under the overall direction of the Attorney General and specifically carried out by Professor McCamus. The review was carried out to ensure that the \$230 million — that's the budget that goes into legal aid — spent annually on legal aid provided the maximum amount of high-quality legal services to those Ontarians who need those services the most. What we're looking for is the best application of those taxpayer dollars to meet the needs of the people who need the service.

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During the review process, many constituencies were consulted. Major legal, community and legal aid user groups were involved in a host of public hearings. The review, in addition to that, received more than 200 written submissions. Following the release of the Ontario Legal

Aid Review study in September 1997, the government continued to consult widely and broadly to get feedback from the public.

The response that was received in this process was absolutely consistent. What people wanted was a legal aid plan that was independent of both government and the service-providers, that was accountable and well managed and that was fiscally stable. That's what the people were looking for and that's what the Toronto Star was looking for. The result that the government set for itself was also that in the end services must be improved as part of the process.

The government has worked with legal aid, with the public, with the legal community and with those representing users of legal aid to ensure that the proposed reforms were balanced, fair and in the public interest. I'm submitting to you, Mr Speaker, and to the members of this House that the Legal Aid Services Act, Bill 68, the bill that we are debating here this evening, if passed, accomplishes all of these goals. I'm not the only one who thinks that. The Toronto Star is on record saying that they believe it as well.

The legislation we are proposing here this evening and we are debating will ensure that the legal aid plan in Ontario will operate on three key principles: better service, better accountability for public funds and the quality of service, and independence, above all, from government and from the legal service providers.

The main elements of the bill I will enumerate for you:

To create an independent statutory agency to provide more services to Ontarians better than was done before. This is independent of the law society, independent of government.

To create an expert board with more public representation, an increase in public representation on the board that governs the provision of legal aid in the province.

To ensure that the new agency is publicly accountable.

To provide a statutory mandate to ensure that the board composition, organizational structure and funding mechanisms for the agency are fully set forward in statutory form.

To establish a modern, cost-effective governance and delivery framework, much more streamlined and much more up to date than has traditionally been the case.

Not least of all, to create a flexible framework for service delivery.

That is exactly what this bill will bring about and that is what the goal was going into this project. That's what countless hours of consultation with numerous groups have been directed towards and that's what has been achieved in the bill that is before us this evening.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'm pleased to respond to the member for York East. Indeed, he stuck to the bill throughout his comments. But I have to wonder. He quoted the Toronto Star so extensively that I must wonder whether there was a visiting editor who may have been at the Toronto Star writing this particular article.

However, he pointed out that the Toronto Star talked about three criteria. One was independence, another was

stability, I believe, and predictability. In terms of stability, there's some question. The minister, of course, has an opportunity to address the whole question of stability in terms of funding levels. Predictability: I would say, yes, you might predict by virtue of the new structure that's being proposed, but will that tell you the funding levels that may be required? I'll be dealing with this.

The member said this had not been addressed by other governments. If I'm able to get on to speak this evening, I will do a very quick review of the last 47 years to show that there were extensive reviews and task forces and bodies that looked at legal aid. This is a very important area for the people of Ontario. It is my hope that the government will see that this goes to committee for hearings, rather than putting out for hearings the bill dealing with registering lobbyists. This is far more substantive. Perhaps this should be the one that goes to hearings.

Mr Kormos: These most recent comments were most interesting in that the member reading from his script, following his marching orders, engaging in trying to generate spin around this, was contradicted but minutes earlier by his own Attorney General here. The Attorney General, you see, doesn't want to take responsibility for the bill. The Attorney General wants to say: "The law society helped draft the bill. Any number of members of the bar helped draft the bill. Don't point the finger at me. These people helped put the bill together." The Attorney General insists that legal clinics were engaged in the consultation.

I say to the member from somewhere around York East, after he read from his scripted little set speech there, the fact is that the bill could have contained guarantees about ongoing funding for legal aid so that clinics, practitioners, would know with some confidence — you're saying once again, "Trust us." That's what you're telling these people, "Trust us," and the bottom line is that the bill doesn't provide any guarantees for ongoing funding for clinics or for practitioners who accept certificates, be they family law, be they civil law, be they criminal law. There are no guarantees whatsoever.

This government, I'm confident, can't be trusted to the point where we can rely, on the Attorney General's mere say-so, that it's going to maintain the status quo in terms of funding for three years. And even if that's the case, what happens at the expiration of those three years? The corporation is going to be forced to do what the government wants it to do, even though the government is going to be able to say: "Oh, it's an arm's-length corporation. It wasn't our decision." But with the government defunding, it'll be responsible for the elimination of those —

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr Tilson: I'd like to compliment the member for York East on giving a summary of what is in the bill. This process has been going on since 1967, which I understand is when legal aid first arrived in the province of Ontario, and since that time the process has gradually deteriorated. The process eventually came to the point where it was bankrupt. It was run by the Law Society of Upper Canada.

There were people who applied for legal aid who weren't getting it, who simply didn't get it when perhaps they should have.

Mr Kormos: Perhaps?

Mr Tilson: There are a whole pile of people who applied for legal aid and received it when perhaps they shouldn't have. There were abuses that took place in the legal aid process.

Mr Kormos: What do you mean, perhaps?

Mr Tilson: The member for Welland-Thorold says perhaps. I have had perhaps as much experience as he has had, and I can tell you that there have been abuses in the process. I've worked in the process and there clearly were abuses. The system wasn't working, and I congratulate the Attorney General for bringing this forward.

Mr Kormos: You shouldn't have taken those certificates.

Mr Tilson: The member for Welland-Thorold continues to interject, but I will say that his government sat there — this crisis, this problem of providing legal services to people who simply don't have it isn't something that has just started. This has been going on for a period of time. Your government sat there for — I don't know how long you were in power — four or five years and you didn't do anything, didn't even think about it.

The Liberals of course say, "This has been studied before," and yes, I expect there is a bookcase of ideas that have been put forward by different governments to amend the process, to try to improve the process. This Attorney General has finally had the courage to correct the system and get a system that's going to work so that the poor single mothers, people who desperately need money to deal with legal problems they have, are going to have assistance, and I congratulate him for that.

Mr Gravelle: I'm glad to have an opportunity to comment on the remarks by the member for York East. It's probably important to point out that it's not simply a question of — there seems to be some concern about which way we're going to be voting on this bill. There's no particular problem, as far as I'm concerned, with some aspects of this bill. The real problem is that it actually doesn't go far enough in terms of some of the recommendations that have gone forward. It's only one piece of the pie.

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Most significantly, and I think it's an important point to make, there's a great feeling of distrust among the people of this province about many of the programs put forward by this government because of the pain they've inflicted on people in the past. A great concern that's being felt by people who want to access legal aid is that there have been many people who, for a variety of reasons and as a result of their circumstances, have not been able to access legal aid. There is some concern that this doesn't go far enough to ensure that takes place. We know that the number of certificates issued was down considerably last year. That's of great concern. As somebody who sits in my constituency office and meets with constituents on a regular basis, I know a variety of people come forward

who have not been able to access it. It has an extraordinarily negative effect on their lives, and they have no other way to access it.

I hope that as a result of this legislation, that will be changing. You just need to understand that our experience has been — we've watched the effect on people of the cuts your government has made. We've watched how people have been devastated and hurt. We've listened to speakers tonight talk about other aspects besides legal aid for exactly those reasons. We've seen what has happened in terms of our health care system and we're watching what's happening in our education system, so there's a level of distrust.

It's important to recognize that if indeed this legislation improves the system, we're all for it. But it doesn't go far enough and it doesn't in any way truly reassure us that people who actually need legal aid are going to receive it. That's the problem. I wish I had a few more seconds, but I don't. Those are our concerns.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for York East has two minutes to respond.

Mr Parker: I am pleased to have the opportunity to thank the members for Ottawa Centre, Welland-Thorold, Dufferin-Peel and Port Arthur for their comments. I want in particular to congratulate and to express my appreciation to the member for Welland-Thorold for his remarks. I am not sure, but I think it's possible that in the course of his two-minute hit he dedicated more time to the subject matter of this bill than he did in the whole hour he had available to him to speak on the subject of the bill earlier on this evening. He criticized me for speaking from notes to keep me on track. Maybe if the member for Welland-Thorold spoke from notes he would do a better job of keeping on track with his remarks.

He criticized this bill, in the course of his remarks, for involving the law society in consultations in drafting the bill. There's no pleasing some people, is there? If the government had drafted the bill without consulting, then we would have failed to consult and it would be an in-house cooked job. By involving other bodies as broadly as we did, he's suggesting that we're somehow trying to blame others for what he is suggesting is already failed legislation. I'm not altogether sure where he was going with that point, but that seemed to be what he was driving at.

The member for Ottawa Centre told us that there were extensive studies and bodies set up to look into this subject by previous governments. That is precisely the point, isn't it? This is an area that has been studied widely and broadly. Has anyone done anything about it? Not until this government, and that's exactly my point here tonight.

The member for Port Arthur said he has some reservations because he believes the bill doesn't go far enough. I'm not really sure what he means by saying it hasn't gone far enough, but we do know one thing: His party, the Liberal Party, formed the government in this province for five full years and they went nowhere, absolutely nowhere, on this subject.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bartolucci: I only have 10 minutes under the new rules and I will be spending the entire 10 minutes talking about the bill. It is very important that we start off this discussion by pointing out what is good about this bill. There are parts that I consider to be very important.

First of all, it's extremely important that a board of directors be set up. That's a good concept. I encourage you to refine that process a little bit to ensure that we don't get what we've come to know at the agencies, boards and commission meetings as the Tory hacks taking over. That's a concern. I have a lot of respect for the Attorney General and I think he'll take that concern very seriously. He will not want to appoint people who are going to be so biased that there will be the perception that the government is selling out the system to Tory appointees. We certainly don't want that to happen.

The concept of a board of directors is a really good idea. In fact, the implementation of the board of directors is going to be very important, and the Attorney General having this much power is not in the best interests of the process. I like the concept and I'm glad the concept is in there, but I think that has to be refined just a little way to ensure that there is protection for the users of the system — and they're not abusers of the system. That's a point I want to make clearly to the people who are watching this tonight. Those people who use legal aid by and large are very genuine users of the system, as opposed to abusers. Are there abusers in the system? Yes. Will there be abusers after this legislation passes? Yes. There will always be those who abuse the system, but the reality is that we should be trying to pass legislation here that it is the best legislation for those people who want to legitimately use it.

I'm also happy that there is mention of paralegals and mediators in the bill. These are very good concepts to implement in the bill. I believe there has to be some more clarification of roles of both the paralegals and the mediators, but I would suggest their inclusion is important and that we try to refine that so that paralegals and mediators are able to use the skills they've been trained to implement in a way that is enhancing of the product for the people who are using it, as well as ensuring that the interests of the province are protected. That's another aspect of the bill that I like, but again I think it has to be more refined, I think it has to be more defined, and if that happens, at the end of the day maybe this legislation can be tolerable to the people of Ontario.

I also like the idea, and I'll commend the Attorney General, of involving the front-line people in the process. I don't believe at this point in time that he's gone far enough with the law society of Ontario. I don't believe that he has consulted enough of the groups and enough of the individuals, but there has been a good first step, so I want to commend the Attorney General for that.

There are some definite disadvantages and weaknesses of the bill that I'd like to address in the next little while, and I'd like to preface those comments by saying I hope the Attorney General and the government are serious about ensuring that this bill goes to committee. I agree

with Richard Patten, my fellow Liberal member, who suggests that this is an important piece of legislation to be brought out to committee for further discussion, for further refining. There's no question that this Attorney General doesn't think he's got all the answers, and he does involve the people in the process. With this bill he's made that attempt. I honestly believe it is important that it go to committee, because there are still some very significant players who haven't been involved in the process and that can best be addressed at the committee level.

The bill has significant shortcomings in that it addresses too few of the problems that exist in the legal aid system. The McCamus report released last fall made 92 recommendations and we're only addressing one or two of those recommendations. I suggest that it is extremely important that the authors, those people who have the legal minds and think these things through, be a part of the committee hearings so that some more of the recommendations can be addressed, and possibly implemented before this finally becomes law.

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I would suggest that for low-income earners the inability to access the legal aid system is becoming severely intensified by the Mike Harris government cuts, and I believe that should be a real problem for the government members. Whether perception is reality, the reality is that in politics perception is the reality, and the perception out there is that you're trying to tilt the balance in this province to a select few at the expense of many. If that perception isn't true, then I think you have the opportunity, with amendments, to ensure that low-income earners have a greater ability to access legal aid.

The bill gives the appearance of making inroads into the issues of legal aid but in fact is of little tangible help to the people who require the services of legal aid. Although the bill brings up the issue of legal aid, it does very little to actually solve the problems of legal aid in Ontario. That's the weakness of the legislation as I see it at this point in time. Is it fixable? Absolutely, it's fixable, but it's not going to be fixed during debate here in the House, because what we have here, what we will always have here, is very partisan comments. Am I partisan? Absolutely, there's no question. Are the members of the third party partisan? No question.

Mr Kormos: No.

Mr Bartolucci: Are the members of the government partisan? No question. One would have to be ignorant to think that they're non-partisan in this place. Maybe the two members who came here from the third party, from the NDP, think that they're not partisan. I suggest that they are very partisan and they show that on a daily basis, as we all do. That's the process in this House.

Courts, like hospitals, continue to be clogged with backlogs. In September there was a case where a young woman was killed as the result of a drunk driver. The case was thrown out of court because of administrative delay. That's a weakness this government should want to address as part of fixing up the legal aid situation which exists presently in Ontario.

Another example: A recent survey by crown attorneys found that they have an average of only five minutes with clients before they go in to prosecute a case. You really have to wonder if our direction with this particular piece of legislation is addressing the concerns that are out there.

Let me spend a few moments with regard to the family support plan. There is absolutely no question that this is crucial for people who are having trouble with the family support plan. Are there people having trouble with the family support plan across Ontario? Absolutely. The government can't deny that. Certainly we in the official opposition, the Liberal Party, have presented case after case. The third party has certainly done its part in presenting cases to the government and to the Attorney General. The concerns are there. We have to ensure in this legislation that those concerns are addressed adequately and fully.

In wrapping up, my one piece of information or knowledge that I would like to transfer to the government that I'd like them to hold on to is that this bill isn't perfect, it needs refining and it needs committee work. Is it savable? Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Kormos: I've got to confess I'm a little amazed at how benign the member is in his comments about the bill when, at the end of the day, this is all about the law society effectively not wanting to administer legal aid any more. That's a given. So be it. The proposal of an arm's-length corporation providing legal aid and administering its services is a viable option. The fundamental criticism is that the corporation is still dependent upon the government for funding. The government sees fit to provide, specifically mentions, and we talked about this already, what I guess you'd call stable funding, ongoing funding at the current levels, to legal aid clinics for three years — that implies that something is going to happen after three years — and similarly, ongoing funding at the current level for two years. The minister promises that the status quo in terms of funding will be maintained for three years. Why couldn't that commitment be in the legislation if indeed the government intends to live up to that particular promise, because it is prepared to legislate with respect to three years for legal aid clinics and two years for refugee law.

As well, there is no establishment in the legislation of a minimum level of service that the corporation has to provide and that the government is therefore responsible for funding. This government or, quite frankly, any subsequent government can effectively scuttle legal clinics — incredibly important in our communities — and legal aid by simply defunding them, notwithstanding this legislation. That's what the Attorney General and the backbenchers don't seem to understand yet.

Mr Tilson: I'd like to respond to the member for Sudbury, and I will say that finally we have a Liberal who stood up and made some comments that pertain to the bill. I don't agree with a lot of his comments, but at least he made some comments directly on topic.

I think we all agree that legal aid has been in a serious downward turn for some number of years. The member for

York East made a comment that between 1989 and 1994 spending on legal aid doubled, and it gradually has been getting out of control.

The member for Welland-Thorold finally got into some of the concerns that he has: Where is the money going to come from? Well, that may apply to a whole pile of things, a whole pile of topics. I'm satisfied that this new organization will be looking at new, innovative ways to solve many of the issues that the member for Welland-Thorold — oh, there he is. He's running back; we've got him. But his time's up. He can't talk any more. So there will be new, innovative ways to deliver services, and they will run pilot projects to test new ways.

The answer that the member for Welland-Thorold says — and I know he's not the person, Mr Speaker — is to simply spend money. The Liberals say the same thing: spend, spend, spend. That may not necessarily be the answer. We've got an obligation to assist people who don't have financial resources to get legal aid, legal assistance, but spending money like they've been doing for the last 10 years isn't the only way of doing it. We have to come up with new ways, and this organization will be developing those new ways, to settle many of these new issues. As I keep saying, I think finally we have an Attorney General who has the courage to bring this forward, because the last two governments didn't have that.

Mr Patten: I want to likewise congratulate my colleague from Sudbury, who did address the issues in a serious manner in talking about the reorganization. I think most members will address and will be a shadow on the discussion, and that of course will relate to the funding of the new organization.

My colleague talked about the involvement of the law society. It seems to me that there is some thought that the law society was happy to have a bit of a different arrangement than their being seen as saddled with all the responsibilities and being blamed for mismanagement in certain quarters, and things of that nature.

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My friend from Sudbury also talked about how users are not abusers, although there is always an element in any large system where, human nature being what it is, some people will take advantage of it. But when I have a chance to speak, I will point out the most recent study that was done on the people who receive legal aid and the certificates, that 90% suited and fit the requirements as outlined by the program. That's an important thing to remember, because often people will exaggerate and suggest that perhaps these people don't really need it, and if they would only get off their butts, they might not have these kinds of problems. I think that's an important point.

I've got 18 seconds. The point of legal aid, of course, as my colleague suggested, is that everything happens in tandem. It's not just legal aid, isolated. Legal aid can function better with mediators, with paralegals, and with an improvement to the administration of the court system itself.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I want to pick up on the funding issue. I would say to the Attorney General

and the government that I support this bill in principle. I know that our caucus will be putting forward amendments, and I want to pick up on the funding aspect of this, which we keep talking about. I just heard again from the member for Dufferin-Peel that throwing money at it — "We have to be careful with taxpayers' money," and all that kind of stuff — doesn't fix the problem.

Well, you know, sometimes you have to spend money to get justice, and that's partly what governments do. There's nobody in this House suggesting that it be spent unwisely, inefficiently, that fraud be committed, or any of that. What we are saying is that this is a shell of a bill, that it is empty, unless you guarantee in the bill that adequate funding is there so that people who need the services have them. Is that too much to ask of this government? I see the Attorney General is shaking his head. If you listen carefully over there and don't just have the knee-jerk response when the NDP caucus talks about the need for proper funding to serve the people who need it, you will hear what we are saying. We want to make sure —

Hon Mr Harnick: You have no credibility talking about money.

Ms Churley: Listen to who's talking about credibility to me: the Attorney General who is making women who go to family court now serve their own restraining orders. A woman in my riding got run over by a car, by her abuser, because the judge's instruction was to tell that woman that she had to serve her own restraining order. Is that what these people on the government side are talking about?

Hon Mr Harnick: Wrong. Wrong.

Ms Churley: I'm not wrong, and I will speak more to that in a couple of minutes.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Sudbury.

Mr Bartolucci: I'd like to thank the members for Welland-Thorold, Dufferin-Peel, Ottawa Centre and Riverdale for their two-minute rebuttals and their comments. I certainly appreciate their comments. We may not always agree, certainly, but it's important that there is this exchange of information.

I'd also like to thank the Attorney General for being present here this evening to listen to the debate. I think he's here for a purpose. I would hope he wants to be here because he's serious about listening to some of the amendments and some of the suggestions. There's a key suggestion here that I will make again: that this thing goes to committee and that we try to get it right. It's imperative for the people who use the system that we get it right. It's not right now, but it can be refined and made a good piece of legislation.

The government will have to address the number of legal aid certificates available to the people who require legal aid. There is such an imbalance now that it's a concern to me, and I guess I can speak from a little bit of authority because the legal aid office in Sudbury is in the same building as my constituency office. Because I am at the corner of Frood and Elm and the legal aid office is at

the back of the building, a lot of people come in who require the services of legal aid, so I know there is a great number of people out there who require the services, who don't have the proper certificates and who are fearful that the service won't be there. It's certainly an area of great concern, to ensure that the legislation is proper.

There is the issue of funding. You don't have to throw money at it, but you have to put an adequate amount of money into it. I would suggest that that will probably happen. I would only hope it's enshrined in the legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Churley: I want to pick up where I left off in my previous two minutes. I wasn't going to start this way, but I was rather provoked by the Attorney General, who continues to say that poor women who can't afford lawyers who go to family court, civil court — because of cuts, they now are given responsibility for serving court documents. I have evidence of that. The Attorney General will not listen. It is very serious.

A woman who went to a shelter in my riding was told by the judge to do that. She delivered it herself. Her abuser deliberately ran her over in his car and injured her. That is one incident. I wish the Attorney General would take note of this and try to correct it. It is happening out there.

I want to say that I do support the bill in principle, but there are amendments that we will be bringing forward. Earlier, our very able critic the member for Welland-Thorold — I had the great pleasure of listening to his entire speech — raised the issue around the appointments to the board. There is real concern about this. I recognize that the law society does not want to run legal aid any more. I guess that the independent, arm's-length body is a good idea, it's an alternative. But they don't agree with everything in the bill. They have some concerns. We are bringing those concerns forward during hearings. I understand there will be hearings. We, as well as other concerned people, will be able to bring these forward. But we hope very much to see at least some kind of establishment of an advisory committee to make sure that those appointments aren't totally partisan.

We've expressed some really big concerns, particularly for the interim or transition committee, where five people will be appointed directly by the Attorney General. That is not a good process. We want to make sure that this is non-partisan and done for the right reasons.

I'm concerned about it because I have sat sometimes on the appointments committee. I have seen, for instance, Norman Seabrook, remember him? He was appointed to the Niagara Escarpment Commission. I and my colleague Shelley Martel, the member for Sudbury East, went to that committee, we put out a press release, we asked the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of the Environment about this question. We pointed out time and time again that here was a man who had a direct conflict of interest. Furthermore, he believed in the abolition of the body that he was appointed to. He had a direct conflict of interest. He was a Tory hack appointed to this board. It was so obvious, it was laughable. He was appointed, and

sure enough a scant couple of months later he had to resign in disgrace. Everything we said about him was true.

We saw what happened to Marion Dewar in Ottawa, who was a very able member of the police services board —

Mr Kormos: Out.

Ms Churley: Out. Out. Years of experience, and she was replaced by a Tory hack.

We saw it over and over again. Grace Patterson from the Environmental Assessment Board, a long-time environmental lawyer, very committed and very knowledgeable: out, a political appointment.

I can guarantee that this is what's going to happen with this board unless you set up a process that is non-partisan. I believe that some kind of advisory body might be the best way to do that. I don't know; we can discuss that further. But I believe, and my caucus believes, that's extremely important.

One of the things I'm concerned about and why I brought up funding — and why the member for Welland-Thorold keeps talking about it — is that we're seeing more and more cases go through the court system. Part of that is because there are no laws passed, for instance, on the Ontario disability act. I'm glad to see the minister responsible here tonight. That was promised during the election campaign. Remember that? We still don't have it. Same-sex legislation: No laws in place. Those are just two examples where more and more people are going, and having to go, before the courts.

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We're seeing poor women not being able to get legal aid. On top of that, as I mentioned earlier, some of them are being put in a terrible position, very offensive. They are caused directly by this situation, these cuts, to be put in danger again. That absolutely has to stop.

Another thing that's just cancelled by this government is intervenor funding for environmental assessment hearings. I won't get into that tonight, but of course environmental assessment hearings are a shell of what they used to be. The heart and soul has been taken out of that, and they're not really hearings any more; they're scoped down so much.

On top of a scoped environmental assessment hearing, there is no longer any intervenor funding. So communities, people who are concerned — we saw that with the Adams mine situation and we're going to see it more and more — very scoped, basically looking at the liner in the ground and nothing else, and then no intervenor funding. That's the kind of thing we're concerned about.

This bill that we're speaking to tonight is, yes, specific to the situation where the law society does not want to run legal aid any more and the government has come up with a plan. I'm glad to see the government has come up with a plan to deal with that, but there are a lot of other issues that have to be dealt with that we cannot ignore, and those have to be mentioned in the context of what we're talking about. I want to see that the people who are appointed to this board don't just have an interest in following the direction, following the policy, the cutback policy, the

anti-people policy, the anti-community policy of this government. I would like to make sure that poor people, who are going to be mostly using these services, are represented on the board. As I see it now, there is no guarantee of that.

Well, guarantee it. I see the Attorney General is nodding his head at this. Let's put it in the legislation. Let's see that that is a guaranteed right. They have a right to a say in how this board is set up and how it functions.

I also want to say tonight that despite what the Attorney General said earlier, there are still problems at the family support plan. I expect that you will be hearing about them soon. The problems there have not been solved. We are still getting calls about some very serious problems that are evolving for a number of reasons, so I just want to put the Attorney General on notice tonight that that is not the end of the story.

Hon Mr Harnick: Give me some specifics and maybe we'll try and deal with them.

Ms Churley: I will. I believe your members were saying earlier to speak to the bill. I will be giving you some specifics, but I think that the problem is a long-standing problem which still has not been fixed.

Hon Mr Harnick: Long-standing, about 10 to 12 years.

Ms Churley: The Attorney General never listens. He is sitting here tonight reading his newspaper and every now and then will look up and make a derogatory comment. What I am saying is really happening out there. What is the point of the Attorney General being here tonight when we're trying to have an exchange, and the Attorney General has just completely closed his mind to any discussion about how this bill could be improved so people will be more comfortable about it and guarantee tonight that he is listening and will make some of the changes that are needed?

I would like to ask the Attorney General quite specifically tonight if he will accept an amendment from our party — or if he wants to put the amendment through himself, that's fine too — that adequate funding will be guaranteed in this bill so that the poor people who need their legal rights, which of course under the Constitution they have, will be upheld. If that is not guaranteed, with a bunch of Tory hacks, the way the bill is set up now, there are absolutely no guarantees that this is going to work for the very people for whom it's designed.

What we're talking about here tonight may seem like just a simple formula if you take it out of context. But if you put it in the context of the kinds of things that are happening to people, to real people in our communities whom we hear from all the time, it is a very serious piece of legislation. The government has two choices. It can go ahead with the way it is now: without the funding guaranteed and the board consisting of Tory hacks who are not chosen on the merits and contributions they can make but more for their desire to follow the Tory line. If that's changed, this can be a very acceptable bill. If those two issues in particular that we are raising tonight are not

taken care of, then this could turn out to be a disaster and a sham for the very people who most need it.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Tilson: I'd like to ask a question of the member for Riverdale on this issue of funding, and this may be the crux of what the opposition's concern is, although gradually more and more members are coming out and saying that they're going to support the bill in principle, and we'll await how the voting comes from that. This issue she has raised about adequate funding, that it be guaranteed, that may be all fine and good. It gets to everything that we talk about in this place, whether it be health, whether it be education, whether it be this topic of legal aid, whether it be social services. I guess we have to live within our means. To guarantee that the money is going to come, where is it going to come from? That's my real question.

I suppose we can raise taxes, which your government did and the Liberals before you did. That's one source of where the money is going to come from. We can ask the lawyers to do it for nothing, which essentially was what they were doing before and was why more and more lawyers stopped doing it. They couldn't afford to run their offices and do all these things for nothing.

I know the member speaks very sincerely and believes what she's saying on this issue, and I suspect that when it gets to committee she will raise it. That may be the main issue the New Democratic caucus would be putting forward, and I look forward to more debate on that. But the real question, somewhere along the line — she can't just say, "Commit X dollars for funding" — the money has to come from somewhere. Where is it going to come from? How are you going to raise the money? It just doesn't float down from heaven.

Mr Gravelle: I certainly enjoyed listening to the comments from the member for Riverdale, her usual impassioned remarks and great concern for the people she represents expressed very well, as always.

It's important to state that the concern we all feel in the House, that I trust all members of the House feel and the Attorney General feels as well, is that we want to be sure that people who need legal representation are able to access it. We have seen far too often in the past, especially under this government as they've slashed and taken away programs and services, that more people are in greater need and in fact are often in need of legal representation and not able to receive it. I certainly want to compliment the member on that.

I want to use the opportunity, if I may, while the Attorney General is still here, to once again bring up the concerns we have about the Family Responsibility Office and the family support plan. Certainly we know the process quite well, but I think perhaps some people have forgotten what has happened. About a year and a half ago, the Family Responsibility Office was put in place, regional offices were all shut down and suddenly access to the family support plan was changed in a very dramatic way. Those of us who are in the positions we're in, in terms of being elected officials in this province, are now

dealing with an extraordinary number of cases of people who simply still cannot access the office. The minister needs to hear and understand that.

This is unacceptable. We are seeing situations where, even from the bureaucrats who are doing the job, as well-intentioned as some of them are, often the information is absolutely incorrect. We're being put in the position where as members of Parliament we're giving incorrect information to our constituents based on what they're giving us. This is not acceptable. I trust that the minister will listen to these remarks and will try to correct that. We know the system is not working.

The legal aid plan is being updated and needs some changes, but this goes only part of the way. One of the things that needs to be dealt with is the improvement and fixing up of the family support plan and the Family Responsibility Office. I hope the minister will be listening to that tonight.

Mr Kormos: I congratulate Ms Churley, the member for Riverdale, for again bringing insights to the defects here, the problems here, the very basic, fundamental problems with this legislation and how it's far from what the Attorney General says it is and what he would want people to believe it is.

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People on the opposition benches are raising legitimate concerns about the bill, concerns about the makeup of the board of directors, whether it's going to be effective in serving the interests that the legal aid system should be serving or whether they're simply going to be mouthpieces for the Tory government; concerns about adequacy of funding so that there really are going to be legal clinics three years from now, so that there really are going to be legal aid certificates in adequate numbers three years from now; concerns about the role of lawyers and the obligations they have and the penalty sections that apply specifically to lawyers that may require them to breach solicitor-client privilege or face the consequences of prosecution. That's what the act says.

The Attorney General, smug little guy that he is, sits there and snarls and smirks and shakes his head. He did the same thing two years ago when we were raising with him problems about the family support plan. He did the very same thing then, and it blew up in his face and he got caught. He got caught, not with his hands in the cookie jar, he got caught doing nothing, because he hadn't paid attention to the concerns that were being raised about the family support plan.

People are raising concerns now about your legal aid plan, and rather than wanting to engage in some sort of dialogue, rather than wanting to listen to concerns that are legitimately being raised, you want to ignore them and just wish we'd go away. We're not going away. You're going to create another disaster.

Mr Galt: I was intrigued with the comments being made by the member for Riverdale. She said more in 10 minutes about this bill, and did a critique on it, than the member for Welland-Thorold did in a whole hour. But, then, in his response to her speech, in two minutes he said

more than he did in the whole 60 minutes earlier in the evening when he was speaking on the bill. I was just a little disappointed that he wouldn't have zeroed in a little more during that 60 minutes.

The member for Riverdale talks about adequate funding, having it guaranteed. That's like an open-ended cheque book, and that's exactly how they operated for their five years and why it got into such a mess. That's why the legal aid plan became a total boondoggle, just a mess. It was all because of the open-ended cheque book policy that you were operating under. The lawyers were enjoying it immensely. They could run out and make out a few certificates and they were in business. That's just not the way to operate in a responsible sort of manner.

It was also interesting to note that the member for Port Arthur was very much in support of the member for Riverdale. It just confirms this unholy alliance, that these two parties have joined together in this coalition. You just can't tell the difference between the members of these two parties. They're almost identical. The Liberals have moved so far to the left that they're pushing the NDP out of the way. If I was Mr Hampton, the leader of the third party, I'd be pretty concerned with how far the Liberals are moving to the left, because there's just not going to be any space left at all. We can see what's going to happen in this next election: They'll probably decide in each riding whether it will be a New Democrat who runs or a Liberal, and then afterwards they'll go on and develop a coalition like they did back in 1985 to 1987.

Ms Churley: The member for Northumberland has got that wrong. I can tell him the big difference between the NDP and the Liberals: We've been very clear that we will take back the tax cut from individuals who are making \$80,000 or more. The Liberals have said they're going to put back a lot of money into these programs but they're going to keep the status quo. I think people are going to have to make choices based on that.

I would say to the member for Northumberland as well, don't underestimate the member for Welland-Thorold and don't make fun of the member for Welland-Thorold. He has more knowledge in his little finger about legal issues than I would say anybody in that party does. I would listen very carefully to what he has to say.

I would say to the member for Dufferin-Peel that he hit the nail on the head when he asked where the money is going to come from. They're certainly not going to have bake sales. I'll tell you where the money is going to come from. It's your responsibility to sit down and figure it out, not just leave it open-ended so that in three years there might be no legal aid plan. If you've got the money to take billions of dollars out of our economy, that's hurting our schools, our education system, our environment — he's waving his hand at me — you've got the money to make sure that the vulnerable people in our society, poor people who need legal aid, are well taken care of.

Nobody is talking about spending money irresponsibly. We're talking about this government taking responsibility, sitting down and figuring out what kind of funding is

needed and would be adequate and guaranteeing that it's there. That's what we're talking about tonight.

I would also like to thank the members for Port Arthur and Welland-Thorold for their comments. I think the member for Welland-Thorold also hit the nail on the head. My sense of the government members tonight, including the Attorney General, is that they're cocky and indifferent and are sitting there not paying any attention to what's being said tonight.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Galt: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to debate this Bill 68. I was interested in the member for Riverdale's comments about their position, that they'll never be the same as the Liberals, that they're going to take back the tax cuts or return the tax cuts if they form the government. With the Liberals, you're absolutely right, we just never know where they might go, whether they'll flip or they'll flop. At least we know the position the NDP is going to take and they have made that very clear.

Bill 68 really focuses in on providing legal aid for low-income people in Ontario. It's designed to create more accountability and greater independence, something that has been very lacking for the last 30 years in our legal aid plan. Bill 68 is the foundation that provides a fair chance for people to get legal representation, and this foundation will be called Legal Aid Ontario.

The original intent of legal aid services in Ontario was to provide legal representation for those who couldn't afford it, to provide services that were essential for them to have a fair trial. The original intent was forgotten when money became squandered on redundant and often unnecessary services, more or less to line some of the lawyers' pockets who took advantage of this. It was sort of a twist on Parkinson's law where —

Mr Wayne Lessard (Windsor-Riverside): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We should have a quorum here to hear these remarks about lawyers, I think.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Lessard: Can you check to see if there —

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Northumberland.

Mr Lessard: I'm asking to see whether —

Mr Galt: Parkinson's law, where work expands to fill the available time. In this case, the work expands to use the available funds.

Mr Lessard: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum present.

The Deputy Speaker: You have to take your seat after one point of order.

Mr Lessard: OK.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Windsor-Riverside on a point of order.

Mr Lessard: I don't believe we have a quorum present.

The Deputy Speaker: Would you like me to check and see? Would you check and see if there's a quorum. I think that's what he wants.

Acting Clerk at the Table (Mr Doug Arnott): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Acting Clerk at the Table: A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: Bill 68 will provide legal aid services through an independent body and will ensure that the funds are managed properly and are used to maximize client services.

This is the first comprehensive review of legal aid that's taken place in some 30 years and I'm pleased that this has been chaired by John McCamus, a leading Canadian law scholar. This review was necessary to understand why on earth the spending had more than doubled from 1989 to 1994.

I welcome back the NDP members who left during the quorum call.

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It's also important that this was carried out to re-evaluate the changing demand on services to ensure that the funds are used to maximum value.

The consultation was very extensive and this is a government that has been doing an awful lot of consultation. If you look at the number of days we've sat in the House versus the number of bills passed, one good example is third reading where the PCs have two hours and 10 minutes for third reading in the first session, the NDP had 48 minutes per bill and the Liberals had seven minutes per bill, just to give you some indication of the kind of —

Mr Parker: How much? Say that again.

Mr Galt: Seven minutes was all the —

Mr Parker: Was that the Peterson Liberal government?

Mr Galt: The Peterson Liberals. That was all the time they gave in the House for third reading.

Mr Parker: Seven minutes.

Mr Galt: The consultation has been very extensive, and because of the interruptions I've had, I won't list all the areas, but it certainly thoroughly covered the public, the legal community and the users of legal aid.

There is no question reform was necessary because spending was totally out of control from 1989 to 1994. It was obvious that the Law Society of Upper Canada was not able to provide the services, and our government brought the spending under control. Ontario taxpayers want to feel secure that their tax dollars are being managed appropriately. They want to know that legal aid services are being provided to those who really need them. They want to know that decisions are not going to be influenced by pressures of either government or the legal profession.

Bill 68: Legal Aid Ontario will be an independent, statutory corporation managed by a board of directors. A majority of the board cannot be lawyers. Most will be from the public sector. It will establish a different kind of relationship between the legal aid plan and the ministry.

Through this legislation, Legal Aid Ontario will be independent and a well-managed organization, delivering improved services. In the past, legal aid services have been abused by both consumers and providers. Recipients, for example, have been misrepresented through things like financial resources to qualify. It's been suggested that to get legal aid, there's been so much misrepresentation that it has gone further than even some of the misrepresentations we hear about from fishing and golf combined.

Bill 68 recognizes the abuses that have occurred in the past and is being very specific on the offences and consequences. There's one in connection with false statements regarding eligibility; also things like extra billing and breach of confidentiality. We as a government have ensured that there will be stable funding at least for the next three years to ensure that services will be maintained through that transition period.

Legal Aid Ontario will be an independent organization. We heard the member for Riverdale being quite critical that it's going to Tory hacks or whatever who would be running and overseeing it, when in fact this will be a very independent organization at arm's length from the government. It will have the responsibility of finding new and innovative ways to deliver the services to the people in Ontario who really need those services.

The bill and Legal Aid Ontario will provide a flexible framework for the delivery of these services. It is being built on the learning experience from the legal aid plan over the last 30 years. It's also a reflection to see and hear, with all the consultation that's been carried out, that we are incorporating most of the recommendations made by McCamus in his report. This will lay out the foundation for legal aid in Ontario for the next 30 years.

The basis of legal aid services will continue through the certificates to private lawyers that we have been familiar

over the past 30 years or so. It will ensure that the clients will be represented and have proper representation when they're in court, and it will ensure that the legal aid clinics will continue to deliver the front-line services that those in need have learned to appreciate in the past.

It's interesting to note that with the consultations and the examination carried out in the review, Bill 68 is designed very similarly to legislation in other provinces and in other countries. For example, throughout the Commonwealth, in countries like England, Wales, Australia and New Zealand, they have adopted very similar legislation.

It's also interesting to note that most, if not all, of the stakeholders who have been consulted agree with the direction in which we are going. They agree particularly since the government is ensuring that \$230 million will be there annually for the next three years. They're pleased that it's going to ensure improved services and that there will be a smooth transition from the present legal aid plan to Legal Aid Ontario.

I'm really pleased to be able to support Bill 68. Certainly it was a big issue in our campaign. In the Common Sense Revolution we made reference to it, to the problems it was creating and that we were going to straighten it out. That is what we're doing: fixing government.

In conclusion, Legal Aid Ontario will provide innovative services to ensure a just and accessible system of representation is available to low-income people in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: It almost being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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